

# Bitter Sweet

\$1.50

Vol. Eight, No. Two

December, 1984



Backyard Beauty by Dalmar McPherson

John Gould: Master of Maine Lingo  
Christmas Memories  
Remembering Printmaker Jean Randall  
Learning to Ski at Forty



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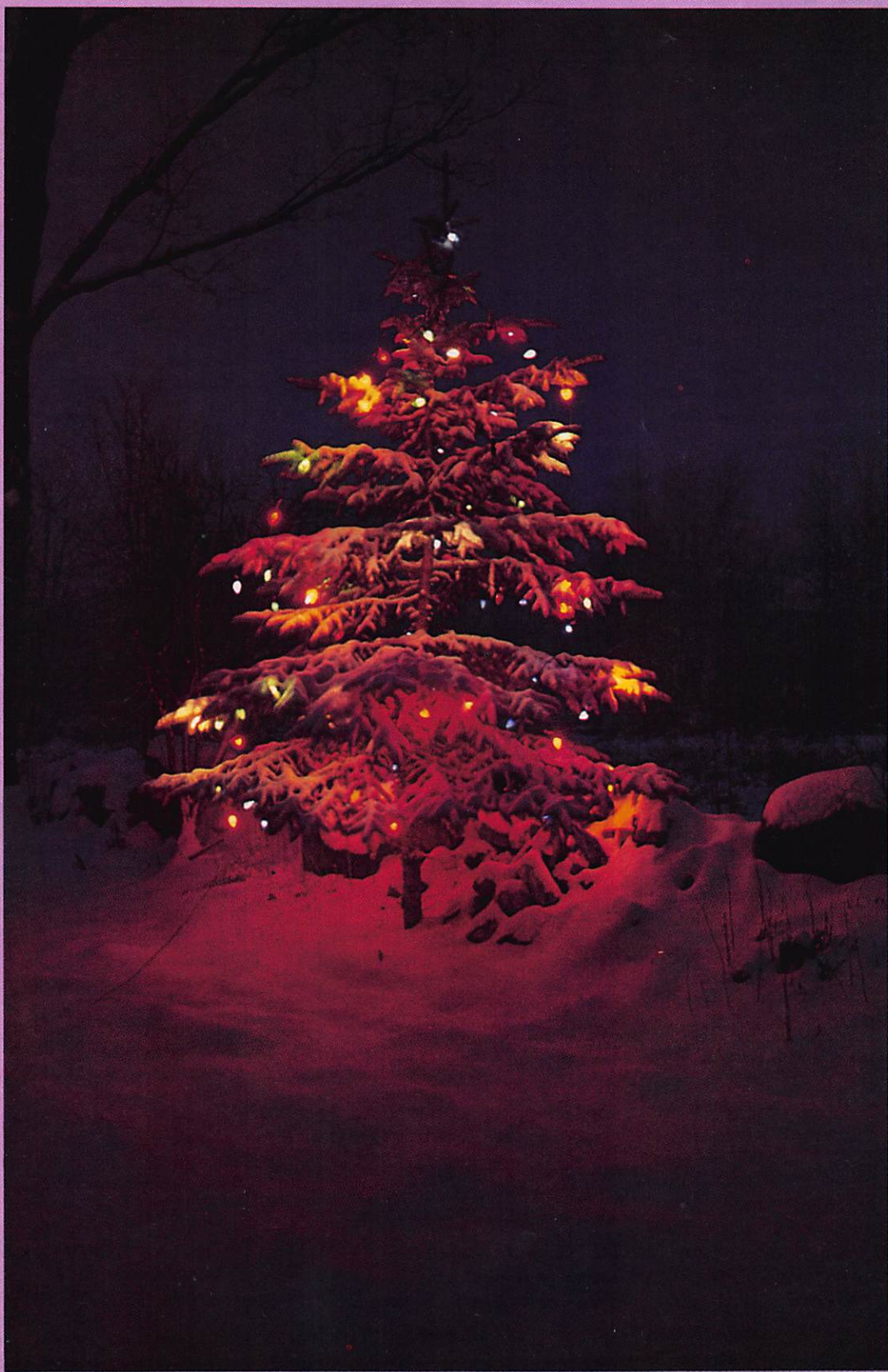
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## SILVICULTURE IN MAINE

My thanks for the story on SWOAM (Small Woodland Owners Assoc. of Maine) in your October issue. It will give a great boost to our organization, and the interest it has aroused should add to your circulation. The story about me made very pleasant reading. Keith Carreiro certainly went overboard in what he wrote. I am trying hard to believe it and have laid the story by for reading on one of those days when nothing seems to be working out right with our work here and in the world as a whole.

*Duncan Howlett  
Center Lovell, Maine*

## CHRISTMAS WHITE AND WONDERFUL

A pearl-and-ermine shawl of snow  
Adorns each evergreen below;  
The regal pines that crown the hill  
Conceal a sleeping fawn and doe.

A rabbit flees the midnight chill  
And scampers home beyond the rill,  
Through crystal vines, a tinkling flight,  
To reach its burrow, dark and still.

The silent stars of silver light  
Are twinkling from a distant height  
Till woods imbued with winter white  
Look like a Christmas card tonight!

*Jean Gier  
Lackawanna, N.Y.*

## YULETIDE FANTASY

Windows rattled and complained in the  
storm

As clouds grew tattered on chimneys;  
A wild whirl of gossamer  
Shared secrets with the breeze that  
Carried pipers' tunes in its arms.  
I looked out upon the tempest,  
Listening for words wrapped in the wind.  
Then sunlight fingered the curtains,  
Dancing on runaway snowflakes  
Escaped from a Christmas card.

*Linda Hutton  
Coeur d'Alene, ID*

## snow song

snow falls  
like soft music  
playing a silent tune  
on the night.

*Nancy J. Dalot  
Waterville, Maine*

## UPON A STAR

Did SOMEONE wish upon that star  
So very far away and long ago?  
I like to think it so.  
That ball of fire lit the world  
Forever to ignite the hopes  
Of all mankind.  
Peace, peace on Earth,  
HE willed, while Angels sang,  
And that first gift lay  
Wrapped in deep humility.  
For you, for me, for all eternity,  
Peace, peace on Earth!  
It echoes still  
HIS will, HIS wish,  
Upon that vehicle,  
The star.

*Mary R. Palmer  
So. Paris, Maine*

## DECEMBER

My days are all numbered;  
My time is encumbered  
With purchasing gifts for the crew.

If there's joy in this season  
It teases my reason.  
The burden is, "too much to do."

Decision, then buying;  
Then wrapping and tying;  
Then worry the thing will not fit!

List checking, hall decking,  
Food shopping non-stopping;  
A race for the Christmas Day skit.

But I guess it's all part  
Of the gift from the heart  
If the road is rocky and worn.

The joy of the season  
Is easy to reason  
When waking up Christmas Day morn!

*Jacqueline Wolfe Bettini  
Springfield, Mass.*

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## BitterSweet Views for Christmas

### OF HOUSES AND BABIES / or WHY I'M CRAZY

My family probably thinks I'm crazy. That's all right; they know I can't help it, so they have no doubt accepted it by now. I can't remember who it was who said, "Home is where, when you have to go there, they have to take you in." I think it was Mark Twain.

Well, that statement is somewhat cynical, and, of course, no one really *has* to take you in. But I can tell you I'm glad my family did. All of us who are trying to afford a home of our own can find ourselves in the same economical bind in the country today. It seems especially true for young families, teachers, writers,

and women (especially single mothers), all of which categories you could have found me in at one time or another. How does one afford the home-of-your-own everyone wants? I wish someone would tell me.

Well, anyway, houses are some of the things that make me crazy. I guess I've been studying, looking at, and planning houses since I was eleven or twelve. That's one of the things I do with any free time; I even teach architecture to my seventh and eighth graders—in a limited way.

I can remember watching my father sketch a floor plan when I was quite young. He's not a builder or architect by trade, but he did design his own home and several camps. He showed me how rooms were planned and I guess I was hooked, for I tried to study drafting in high school. That was the 1960's and girls weren't allowed to do things like that in Maine (happily the situation has changed), so I waited for college and took all the architectural courses I could.

In the mid-1970's I was living with my family in a cape-style house almost two hundred years old (complete with horsehair plaster, hand-wrought nails and "Christian" doors) when I realized that those wise old builders knew how to build a house so that its northern exposure was protected and its windows faced south. Even without insulation, that house was warm on a sunny day. I became a proponent of passive solar building about that time. Several friends (all male!) told me it wouldn't work in New England. I believed otherwise and read a lot written by architects who proved otherwise.

Well, you see, that wasn't totally crazy. I have been living ever since out of trunks and trailers and other people's houses, and my furniture has been in storage in other people's barns since 1975. I still believe that I will one day build a house that is warming and wise for the future. Maybe I'll even convince the rest of my family.

Okay, what's really crazy is that I'm writing this column on a hot day in late summer, and this is a winter holiday column. And I started thinking about babies before I went on to houses. There is a correlation there, truly there is. Thinking about a house of one's own is a natural step in a fulfilling life—that includes good jobs, friends, faith, and children.

Babies, you see? That's another subject I'm just a little crazy about. At a summer baby shower it occurred to me there's a lot of hope involved in having

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# Can You Place It?



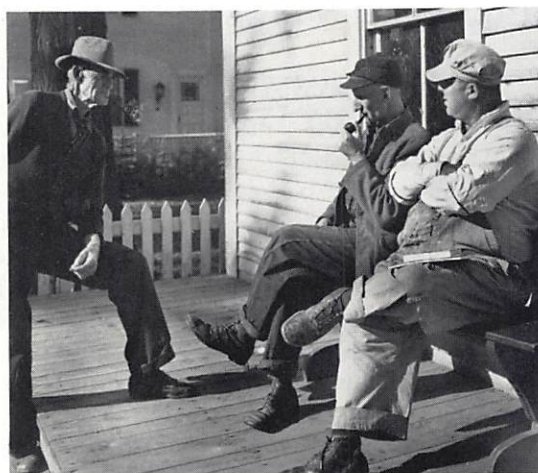
*If you can identify the location in the top photograph, write us at P.O. Box 266, Cornish, Maine 04020. The first postmarked correct answer wins a free subscription to BitterSweet.*

Winners will be announced in the second issue following publication of the photograph, due to our printing deadline. Below are other photos of last month's location, Farmington Falls, Maine, as taken by George French about fifty years ago.

The October photo was identified first by Robert Swain of Andover, Maine, who wins the subscription. Letters also came from Charles Cutting and Mrs. William Swan of Andover; and from Paul McGuire of Bethel, Maine, who wrote: "The photo...is one of the C. A. Rand water-driven sawmill on the west branch of the Ellis River, just north of Andover, Me. village. In its last years it was known by its operator's name—locally as Chase's Mill. Unfortunately, it is gone. For years in the 1950's and 1960's, it stood as if the boys simply went home. Books were in the office, long logs on the carriage. The machinery ran from belts running off a water-driven main shaft under the mill."

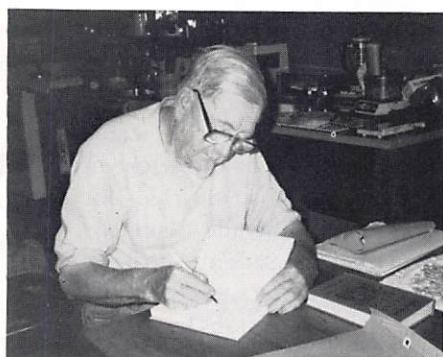
The center-fold photographs in November were of the same mill, taken in the 1960's before it fell down. Mrs. Swan identified the builder of the mill as Lou Ripley.

*BitterSweet* is always looking for the loan of unusual old photographs. They will be returned unharmed if you include a self-addressed stamped envelope.





## A Portrait of John Gould



## Master of Maine Lingo

*by Jack Barnes*

John Gould is a man of many talents—scholar, teacher, farmer, politician, carpenter, fisherman, woodsman—the list is long. He has packed more things into one lifetime than most people would in several lifetimes. Anything that John has ever set his hands and mind to doing, with the possible exception of driving his grandfather's oxen, he has done well.

But, looming like Mount Katahdin above the rugged Maine landscape, his accomplishments as a writer overshadow all of his other talents. To the literary world he is known as John Gould, the humorist from Maine who writes about Maine people and who is a master of the lingo. So

successful has he become as a writer of local color that distinguished literary critics are hailing him as the "Mark Twain of the twentieth century."

What is truly amazing about John Gould at seventy-five is that he has had two books published (his nineteenth and twentieth) in less than a year and may very well complete a third before his seventy-sixth birthday. Moreover, his last book—**No Other Place**, published by W. W. Norton—is a novel, his first! If laudatory comments by distinguished writers and excellent reviews from literary critics—including Martin Kramer of the **Wall Street Journal**—have any impact on the reading







*The Gould home in Friendship, Maine*

public, John Gould is destined to become an instant success as a writer of historical fiction.

Elisabeth Ogilvie, one of America's most popular novelists and neighbor of John Gould, wrote in a recent letter, "John's book is great. I hope it does as well as it deserves. It had me reading history afterwards."

David E. Philips, who has been doing book reviews for **Down East** magazine for nearly thirty years, referred to John's **No Other Place** as "A rollicking first novel from Maine's venerable Mark Twain."

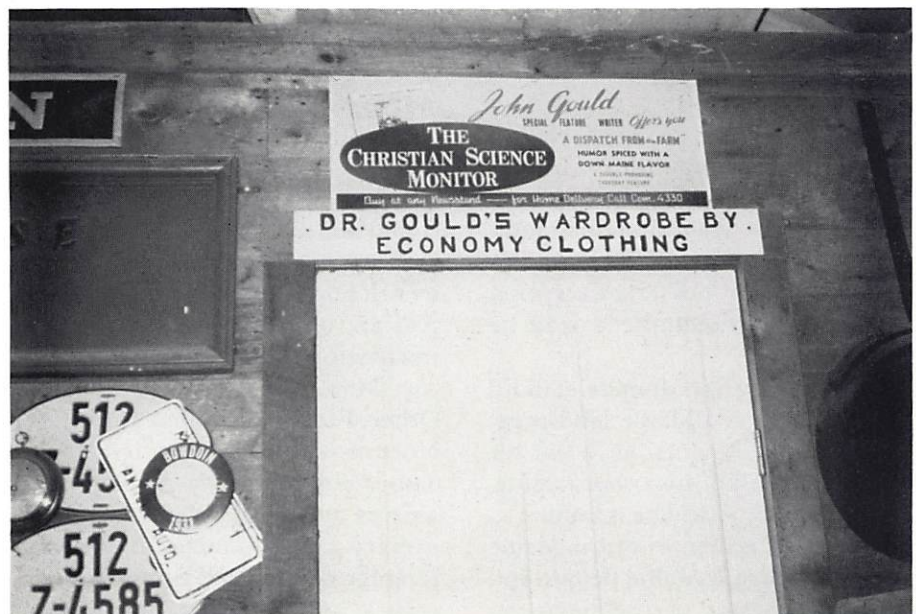
People from around the world have come to know Maine and its native people through the works of John Gould; yet, it comes as a great surprise to many when he hesitantly states, "I wasn't born in Maine," for one would never guess that he did not sprout from its glacial soil.

John Gould was actually born in Medford, Massachusetts, but all of his boyhood was spent in Freeport, Maine, and out on his grandfather's farm at Lisbon Falls. John's father, who was born and reared on the Lisbon farm, worked as a mail clerk for the Boston and Maine Railroad.

John's happiest moments as a young boy were spent with his grand-

father on the family farm. In those days there was a trolley running from Freeport to Brunswick, but John would have to walk the ten miles or so to get to the farm at Lisbon Falls. But he loved his grandfather dearly, and the many wonderful experiences that he shared with him made an indelible impression on John and set the pattern for his relationship later on in life with his own two children and five grand-

*John's office*



children. Also, the people he knew and the rich experiences that he had, both at the farm and in Freeport, were filed away in his remarkable memory and later proved to be an inexhaustible source of material for all but two of his books.

John was educated in the Freeport public school system and was taught the rudiments of English, Latin, and Greek. In 1926 he entered Bowdoin College. It was here that he met Emerson Bullard, who in recent years retired from business and built a beautiful retirement farm in Denmark called the Bull Ring Farm. This was the beginning of a lasting friendship, and it is to Emerson Bullard, whom John affectionately calls Emmett, that he dedicates **No Other Place**.

### "Joe Bowdoin Says"

It was also at Bowdoin that his talent for writing humor first came to light, for each day he would write something short and witty either in verse or in prose entitled "Joe Bowdoin Says," include a sketch of Joe Bowdoin in academic attire, and attach it to Emerson's door. The following are selections from Emerson's



collection of John Gould memorabilia.

*"Joe Bowdoin Says,"*

*"Oh mamma - get the hammer -  
There's a fly on baby's head."*

*"Joe Bowdoin Says" -*

*"Someone in the art class carved the  
following immortal stanza on the  
prof's desk" -*

*"There was an old sculptor  
named Phidias*

*Whose knowledge of art was  
insidious.*

*He carved Aphrodite without  
any nightie*

*Which startled the purely  
fastidious."*

On occasion "Joe Bowdoin" was more loquacious:

*"That story of the Bowdoin man  
climbing the chapel tower sounds all  
right. I can see how he got up, and  
how he got down, but what the devil  
did he want up there?"*

*"It's like the man climbing the  
Bunker Hill monument—he was  
scared stiff—and when he got to the  
top his wife says, 'Isn't it beautiful  
down there?' To which he replied,*

*"Then what the Los Angeles did you  
come way up here for?"*

According to Emerson, everyone in the dormitory looked forward to the next "Joe Bowdoin Says." But then they became collector's items, and frequently the daily message from "Joe Bowdoin" disappeared from Emerson's door knob before he could read it.

Emerson Bullard may very well

*John & Dorothy Gould*



*Jacob's house*

enjoy the distinction of having received the longest addressed envelope ever written. It was of course, addressed by John Gould, July 7, 1927:

*"The writer of this delightful epistle would be infinitely pleased if those who have in hand the duty of delivering the letters intrusted to the United States Mail will see that it is presented as soon as it is convenient to a funny guy who lives in Wrentham, Massachusetts. His name is Emerson Bullard, and he makes his home with his parents, at 126 South Street in the above town. Mr. Bullard would probably be pleased too."*

In the closing paragraph of the epistle written in Freeport, John wrote: *"I am shovelling gravel in the town pit, for the roads. It won't be for much longer, though, because at the rate I am going either I or the gravel will give out soon."*

*-Johnnie-*

John did not return to Bowdoin in the fall. Instead, he elected to take a year off to work for the **Brunswick Record** as a staff reporter and photographer. It was during this year off from college that he gained valuable





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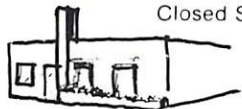
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experience in the newspaper field. He returned to Bowdoin the following year and graduated in 1931.

John first met Dorothy, now his wife, in 1915. "We were babies then and we slept together in the same cradle. We still do," Dorothy relates with her own good sense of humor.

Dorothy Wells was born in Somerville, Massachusetts, and grew up in Arlington where she graduated as valedictorian of her high school class. Like John's father, her father also worked as a mail clerk for the Boston and Maine Railroad. Consequently, the Wellses and the Goulds became good friends and visited each other frequently.

In the summer of 1930, Dorothy and her parents came to Maine on vacation. "Let's stop and see the Goulds," her father suggested.

They did, and John and Dorothy fell in love, as their daughter puts it, "at first sight."

Nothing could keep Dorothy away from Maine after that. She would drive her father's 1931 Model-T Ford from Massachusetts to Bowdoin to be with John on week-ends. It took seven and a half hours to drive over roads that in many stretches were rutted and bumpy; but she always made it and the Goulds still own the car. The engine is in perfect condition, which is a reminder that they don't make cars the way they used to. In fact, both their son John and daughter Kathy learned to drive and passed their driver's test with the family heirloom.

Any young man lucky enough to have an attractive and intelligent young lady endure so much just to be with him should have the good sense to marry her as soon as possible. John did. The date for the happy nuptial was set for October 22, 1932, a little over a year after he graduated from Bowdoin.

John chose his old college chum Emerson/Emmett to be his best

man; and the day after the engagement was announced, John wrote one of his typical hilarious letters to his old friend. The following are selections from the letter:

Dear Emmett,

*Dorothy went through the customary act of announcing our engagement last night, and that means that there is nothing I can do about it from now on. A bride in training is like a mountain freshet—no one can stop it or her.*

*The invitations are in the process of manufacture, and I am fast whipping the house into shape for habitation, such as dusting the pantry, chopping kindling wood, putting in parlor lamps, and laying carpets. I am therefore broke, and exist from pay-day to pay-day, and by the time the wedding comes off, I will be a pauper. I'll be lucky if I have even an undershirt by that time.*

*Louise (John's sister) is going to be best-female man, whatever they call her, and will carry a pot of geraniums intertwined with Pennyroyal, tansy and thyme, wearing a gorgeous creation of tufted twill burlap handed down by her mother, who found it in the attic and passed it through the scuttle, etc.*

While John was still a senior at Bowdoin, he learned that his grandfather's farm was to be put up for auction. He immediately got on the phone and called long distance to Dorothy in Boston, something that in those days was seldom done.

"What do you think about my buying the farm?" John asked.

Neither of the two had any money, least of all John. Nevertheless, both agreed that it would be a wonderful place to bring up children, as indeed it later proved to be. John managed to buy the farm but had no money to do anything with it and would not for several years after their marriage.



For a few years the couple lived in Vermont where John taught journalism at Goddard College.

In 1940, John finished his first book (illustrated with excellent photographs that he had taken) called **New England Town Meeting**, published by the Stephen Daye Press of Brattleboro, Vermont. John gleaned the material and took the photographs to compile this book about the unique democratic institution that still survives in Maine and Vermont by covering the town meetings in Freeport, Durham, Harpswell, and Brunswick. Many citizens were still coming to the biggest social event of the year by horse and buggy and lobster boat.

The following year, inspired by his wife's announced pregnancy and birth of his son John, Gould wrote an hilarious little book called **Prenatal Care for Fathers**, which was also published by the Stephen Daye Press. As an introduction to the book, he refers to it as "A non-medical, non-technical, non-scientific explanation of the masculine side of the matter, with much that is helpful and nothing that is wholly useless."

John wrote it as if he were still living in the Victorian Era when announcements regarding a wife's pregnancy were a highly discreet matter and the proper time to tell friends was usually left to the discretion of the maiden aunt or aunts of the family. Unfortunately, only 5000 copies were printed, and those who collect John Gould's books may find it extremely difficult and expensive to locate a copy of this delightfully written book.

During these early years of his marriage, he was also writing essays and articles, mostly humorous and mostly about the people of Maine, for the *New York Times Magazine*, the *Baltimore Evening Sun*, and the *Christian Science Monitor*. After forty-two years, John is still writing

a weekly column for the *Monitor*.

Inevitably, the Goulds returned to Maine, and John began building a log cabin out at the farm in Lisbon Falls. The lovely old house built in 1780 by Jacob Gould, his great-grandfather, had been destroyed by fire. It was while John was finishing the cabin that their daughter Kathy was born, and Dorothy and her infant returned from the hospital to move into their humble dwelling.

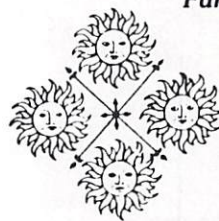
John was diligently at work on his third book—**The Farmer Takes a Wife**—in which he included many of the essays previously published in the *Times*, *Evening Sun*, and the *Monitor*. It was first published by Grosset and Dunlap in 1946. He dedicated it to his little daughter Kathy; this was the real beginning of what has been a long and successful literary career. The money from the sale of **The Farmer Takes a Wife** enabled him in 1946 to begin rebuilding the house that had burned.

So thoroughly did John love and appreciate the large two-story square house built by his great-grandfather that he was determined that the exterior and much of the interior, with the exception of a modern kitchen and bathrooms, would be reconstructed exactly as Jacob had built the original house. He began harvesting logs from a twenty-five-acre wood lot that would provide every beam and piece of lumber, including the broad knotty pine floorboards, that went into the rebuilding of the house. Only the clapboards were purchased.

In his second successful book, **The House That Jacob Built**, (published by William Morrow and Company in 1948) John wrote, "My great-grandfather built one in 1780. I built one in 1946. It is, to all intents and purposes, the same house. I know what he went through."

The "Dedication" reads: "To my mother and father, first, and to all the family who derive their begin-

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Left to right, Kathy Christy, her parents Dorothy Gould and John Gould, Diane Barnes

nings from the house that Jacob built. After that, to such as helped us build the old house again."

It was that house in Lisbon Falls where, for several years in the 1950's, John did a fifteen minute radio program for WLAM in Lewiston. Each morning at seven o'clock he would announce, "This is John Gould from the funny, funny side of Sunshine Ridge." He had a pet rooster named Fiddlehead that he had trained to crow just as he came on the air.

For several years during the late 1940's and early '50's, John ran the *Lewiston Enterprise*. Inevitably, however, the syndicated newspapers forced him to close. Undismayed, he then took advantage of the extra time to concentrate on putting together more books for publication.

Then there was a period of time when book sales declined drastically, so John got busy and built a greenhouse and began raising flowers. At the time he was the only florist between Brunswick and Lewiston. Dorothy contributed her share to the business by learning how to make corsages, and both children pitched in and helped make the business a real family affair. John also planted three or four acres of sweet corn which Kathy and John, Jr. loaded into the family station wagon

and delivered from door to door.

John's dry humor, his vast storehouse of knowledge of Maine and its small towns and people, and his own ability to speak in Down East vernacular made him a very popular after-dinner speaker; and a goodly amount of time was spent on the lecture circuit which involved traveling throughout much of the United States. John Gould could speak on any topic. He could recite passages from Virgil, Cicero, and other classical writers in Latin and Greek; but his witty anecdotes about Maine and its people kept his audiences on the edges of their seats and roaring with laughter. There were those who compared him to Will Rogers. At times, however, some people failed to see through his dry humor, and he was taken seriously. For example, he created the fictitious Lisbon University. Now Lisbon didn't even have an accredited high school, let alone an institute of higher learning; but thanks to John, a lot of people came to believe it did. He also convinced so many people that one could determine the quantity of milk that a cow could give by the tilt of her horns that he finally had to give up telling that yarn completely.

John Gould has never written a book called *On the Lecture Circuit*

or *Anecdotes of An After-dinner Speaker*; but if he ever does, it should be a "humdinger." An example in hand is a letter John wrote to me recently in which he described a humorous experience he and Dorothy had many years ago at what today is known as the Cornish Country Inn (BitterSweet's home), but was then called the New Lincoln Hotel.

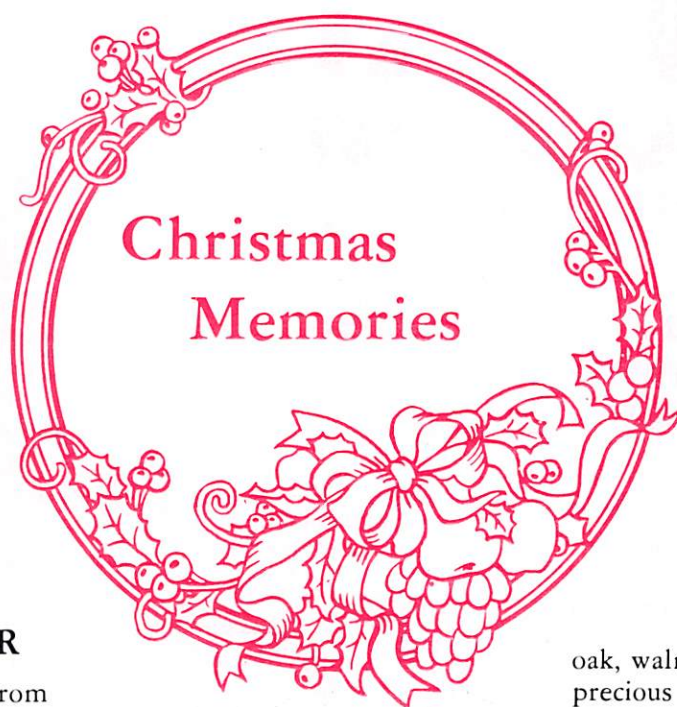
"One time I spoke in Cornish—'twas June 26, and I think 1946, and for the Sigma Club. The lady running the show reserved a table for us at the Cornish Inn, and we arrived there for supper. Over in the corner was a table set for two, a card on it 'Reserved,' and opposite a long family-style table which soon filled up with a crew of telephone construction men. We, of course, had not identified ourselves, and simply had an ordinary table for two over on the other side. Supper was excellent, and while we ate, the telephone men speculated aloud on who would be important enough to warrant a reserved table, in Cornish, and they hoped whoever the snob was he'd arrive so they could look him over. They dallied some, but whoever had that table never showed."

Back when John and Dorothy had marriage on the planning board and the family farm at Lisbon Falls was to be put up for auction, they both agreed that the farm would be the best place possible to rear a family. It was. Farming, writing, and doing all the other things that John did while Dorothy had a big house and a family to take care of kept both of them close to the grindstone most of the time. But John, Jr. and Kathy were always involved in the family projects. They had no time to be bored, they never lacked for love and affection, they had a good library at their disposal, and as Kathy proudly acclaims, "My father made a wonderful teacher! He was the best teacher I ever had."

Both John, Jr. and Kathy have

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## A SCENT OF CEDAR

They lived a dozen miles from town and well out of shouting distance from neighbors. A juniper, the only sign of growth in the winter-resting land, stood between their house and the barn-like woodworker's shop.

Papa was out there now, on Christmas Eve.

"I have a little job I want to do," he had said. "I won't be long."

In the house, Mama and Michelle sat by the fireplace, curling ribbons into fat bows for brightly wrapped presents.

The warm air was scented with cinnamon, nutmeg, sage and thyme—but not a hint of cedar. They had to do without a Christmas tree this year because Papa hadn't been well enough to go to the woods and cut one.

Hesitantly, Michelle said, "Mama, is Papa really going to get well?"

"For sure," Mama said, hugging her. "He only had a near heart attack. He's taking good care of himself and he'll be right as rain in the spring."

"It's good to see him looking better," Michelle said. "I'm going to see what he's working on."

"Good. Tell him I'm making hot chocolate."

Michelle bundled up in her coat and went out. She ran to the shop and eased through the sliding door. The familiar sharp-angled shapes of lumber, sawhorses and cutting tables formed a shadowy setting for Papa. Spotlit in the overhead light, he seemed to be polishing something on his workbench. He looked over his shoulder and grinned at her.

Michelle buried her hands in her pockets. "Mama's making hot chocolate."

"Good timing; I'm just finishing up."

"What are you making, Papa?"

"A little surprise for you and Mama, so don't peek!"

"Okay. I'll stay right here."

She perched on an empty crate and breathed deeply, enjoying the fragrances of cut wood. Planks of

oak, walnut and maple, with a few precious pieces of mahogany and rosewood, lay in racks on one side of the shop. Wood-shavings were scattered around the planing table. She picked up one of the curlicues and nibbled, savoring the taste of cedar.

Papa replaced tools on the board above the workbench and light played on the sawtoothed edges and chisel blades. She had learned the names of tools along with her A-B-C's. Once, she had made up a jumping-rope jingle:

Band saw, hand saw, buzz  
saw, ax,

Thumb plane, sander, hammer  
and tacks.

We cut and smooth and nail  
and glue

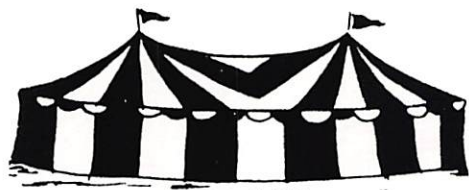
To make some chairs and  
tables, too."

She was startled out of her daydream and jumped up when Papa said, "I'm ready. You run along and I'll turn out the light."

"Okay, Papa."

After hanging up her coat, she found Mama reading by the fireplace. "Papa will be here in a minute."





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"What was he working on?"

"I don't know. He said it's a surprise."

The back door closed with a thud, and Papa came into the room, grinning and awkwardly hiding something behind him.

He peered at them over steamed glasses and said, "Just because I wasn't able to go to the woods for a tree doesn't mean we have to do without one." And he stood aside to reveal a perfect little Christmas tree.

"Oh, Papa, it's beautiful!" Michelle held it like a bouquet and smelled the evergreen fragrance of Christmas. The tree-top tickled her chin and she touched each branch. Her prying fingers discovered the secret and she looked at Mama.

"Papa made it! He drilled holes in a scrap of broomstick and used juniper trimmings for the branches."

"Wait," Papa said. "There's still something missing." From his pocket he took a silvery star—snipped from tin, with tiny holes punched in, it swayed from a wire loop on a nail.

"I drilled a hole for the nail," he said, as he handed the star to Michelle. "This is one star that won't fall."

Michelle placed the shining star and carried the tree near the presents. She began arranging them around the tree.

"It's the loveliest Christmas tree imaginable," Mama said. "We're lucky to have a woodworker in the family."

"A woodworker and more," Michelle said. "Papa is a wonder-worker."

"For sure."

*Betty Blanchard  
 Bedford, MA*

*A grandmother and a technical typist, Mrs. Blanchard hopes to retire and write for children.*





## CHRISTMAS COMES JUST ONCE A YEAR

Each year our Christmas tree looks the same. When I was very little I thought the exact same tree was kept hidden in the attic and brought downstairs for this one special day.

The tree is a great big, blue spruce with its lowest branches spread out as long as my body. Ornaments that have been in my family for nearly a generation dangle from every available limb. On top, a lighted star seems to me as far away as those in Heaven. The smell of its needles lingers in my memory from one Christmas to another. It's a good feeling to know there'll always be a Christmas and we'll always have a tree.

Christmas is an unbelievable treat: a few hours of joy for which it takes weeks to prepare and from which it takes days to recover. Some of my

friends want Christmas all the time. I'm happy knowing it comes once a year—although it's difficult to let go once it arrives. The anticipation is unbearable. In December, I hardly sleep through an entire night. I toss and turn, reliving all the Christmases that have come before. Six, so far, that I can remember.

Shortly before noon relatives start pouring into Aunt Jean's house. Before long there are forty or more gathered in clusters. There's always a new baby who gets as much attention as Christmas itself.

"We're a closely knit family from good hearty stock," my mother says. She says our ancestors were in that first bunch of Pilgrims. I think my relatives have been getting together pretty much the same way since those Pilgrim boats landed.

Christmas always seems shorter than other days. I don't want to miss a single moment. I beg my family to

hurry up. It's a miracle that we and all the presents we're holding can fit into the car. I'm stuffed in the back as usual, but at least my feet touch the floor this year. The ride isn't that long, but once I'm packed, I just want to get there.

Aunt Jean's house is whiter than the snow around it. The sun is so strong that I have to squint my eyes. Evergreens dotted with tiny, frozen icicles guard the path. Ahead, nailed to the door, is the biggest, roundest wreath imaginable. We barge right in, shouting, "Merry Christmas!" My favorite holiday begins.

I've never seen a castle, but Aunt Jean's house will do. Tapestries line the walls in between portraits of my darkly dressed ancestors. Oriental rugs cover the polished floors. Last year when no one was looking, I slid across the entire front hall. Today, holly and greens decorate every available spot.



After greeting us with hugs and kisses, Aunt Jean hurries back into the kitchen. She has to supervise the many "helping hands." Mother puts down the goodies she's made. I'm sure I could kill for my mother's fudge. Not only is there chocolate but also pure, white divinity and creamy penuche. Christmas only comes once a year and I've eaten as much fudge as I could get away with before we came. An uncle reminds me I get sick every Christmas. Somehow my stomach has trouble remembering from year to year. I take another piece.

Cardtables are already set up. This is where we younger kids have to eat. There are too many of us to all sit at the main table. I figure I'll be at least sixteen before I make it over there.

After being told how much I've grown, by faces I hardly remember, I finally make my way into the living room. The tree is in the far corner exactly as I remember.

Our arms and shopping bags are stuffed with presents, but there's no room to put more under the tree. It's jam-packed. We carefully seek out crevices where our gifts will fit. I can't help sneaking a look to see if my name is on any of the tags.

No one's allowed to open a present until after we've finished eating. I'd like to grab mine and open them right now, but my grandmother is watching. Why does it take so long to cook Christmas dinner? I don't think I can make it. My mother insists I will.

Finally, the turkey's ready. All the good china, silver, and crystal have been polished. I'm sure there are entire countries that don't have this much food on the table. None goes to waste. I can take as much as I want but I better not leave any on my plate or I'll be stared to death. A hand comes out of nowhere and plops some turnip and some squash on my plate. "It's part of Christmas

tradition and you'd better get used to it." I don't like these vegetables but I don't put them back, because the cousin who put them there is about four heads bigger than I am.

I've eaten too much again. I may never move from my chair, but I have to. I'm on clean-up squad and Mom is giving me the high-sign. Most everybody else gets to go in the other room and talk about what's happened since last year. I can hear them laughing. Each story is funnier than the last. Mainly because each of my aunts exaggerates. "They should have all been on the stage," says Grandma, as she continues stacking the dishes.

I rush through the pots and pans, hoping I'm still young enough to help pass out the presents. Somebody's going to take that job away from me this year or next. My pants are soaked through from the dish-water but I'm finished.

Presents are opened one at a time. Too much thought and time has gone into choosing the perfect gift. Everybody has to "ooh" and "ahh" at all the work somebody else has gone

to or it just isn't Christmas. The pile of presents dwindles and eventually disappears. I crawl around behind the tree. Maybe there's one left. Wrapping paper stands half way to the ceiling. The noise has died down. Many overstuffed bodies are now snoozing in their overstuffed chairs. Somebody is snoring. I'm feeling a bit woozey. Maybe I should have settled for one piece of pie.

It's dark outside. The crusted snow glistens from the streetlights. Christmas is coming to an end. I can feel it. Like a planned signal, coats and boots are retrieved from upstairs bedrooms. Excuses are made for leaving. Don't they realize this day won't come for another year? Why do they let it end so early? If they really cared, they'd sit down and think of something else for us to do.

Any minute now and we'll all be gone. Mother's collecting her dishes. Others stand around putting on gloves and scarves, commenting on how good the turkey was. "Not a dry piece on the bird."

Stop it! Just go! I worked so hard making all those place cards and buying the right size shoe laces for each uncle. I spent ages making the right "diamond" pin for each aunt. I don't want the day to end. Doesn't anybody understand?

I look at the tree. It's nothing like when we first arrived. It's not so happy. Neither am I. I try not to look grumpy.

"Yes, I'm thankful for all I received. No, I'm not ungrateful. Sure, I had a good time." I say all the right answers, but at this moment I'm not terrifically happy. Maybe tomorrow I'll be a little happier, but I can't make any promises. By next year I suppose I'll be happy again.

*Paul Vaughn  
Van Nuys, CA*



*Paul Vaughn was a Cape Cod boy who now writes for Hollywood and acts in NBC-TV's "Cheers."*



## MY FATHER'S CHRISTMAS GIFT

"I'm going now," my father said. He pushed his oak chair from the Sunday dinner table and stood up.

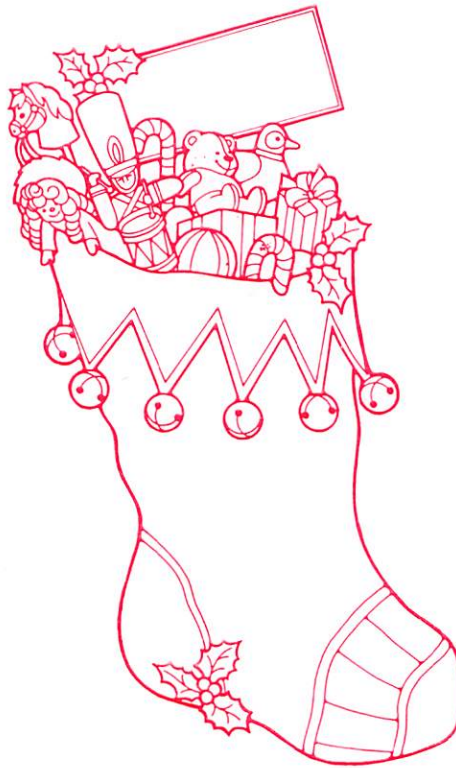
I snapped back my own chair. "Christmas is beginning," I thought. My mother and I followed him into the back hall where all his gear hung ready: his lumberjack black boots, his checkered wool jacket, and his leather hat with the red lining. He put it all on and picked up the long handled ax he'd sharpened the Sunday before. Then he kissed my pale mother and bent down and pinched my cheek. "I'll find us the best tree in Grandpa's woods," he promised.

Snowflakes flew into the house when he opened the door. He winked at us, then closed the door behind him. My Mom put her arm around me. Together we watched through the little window in the door until the snow hid his red and black checkered back from us.

It was that Sunday afternoon when I, just eight, understood for the first time the meaning of Christmas.

My father, old by his generation's standards, married at thirty. He hadn't time before. His father had told him on his sixteenth birthday, "You've had enough schooling. Now you've got to help the family." He was sent each winter to the woods as a lumberjack. At planting time they sent him to a farm. He hated logging and farming, but he dutifully sent money home until all his brothers and sisters could manage on their own. Finally he saved enough cash to buy a bankrupt country store. He worked there from 6 a.m. till 10 p.m. six days a week. The seventh day, Sunday, he attended church. After services he opened the store so that farmers in town for religion could buy their necessities. Sunday afternoon, finally, my father rested.

But this Sunday afternoon he was trudging knee deep in snow, search-



ing the woods for our tree. In those days, no one planted blue spruce or balsam or sheared them into perfect Christmas tree cones. Most trees, wild in the wood, grew lopsided, or bare or spindly.

And so, my father's search was difficult. Our tree had to be special—so soft that I could brush its branches against my cheek and it would feel as soft as my mother's long, brown hair. It wouldn't be just any green, but the blue-green of a northern night at dusk as the moon begins to rise on the snow and turns it blue.

Our tree had to fill the house. Its evergreen pitch would take only an afternoon to change every room into Christmas. I would go to bed, away upstairs and down the hall from the tree. But already by its first night in our house, in my room and under the quilts, I could sniff the pine air and know it was Christmas.

My father didn't squash the tree into a corner of our living room. No,

he'd place it so every branch could stretch out as it did in the woods. It would reach so far that my Mom and Dad and I could all lie side by side on our backs under its branches and pretend we looked through the tree to the sky to find the Christmas star.

When my father found such a tree, we would hang on it our few, colored glass balls and slowly winding mirrors. Hidden in the mighty branches, a colored bit of glass looked like a cardinal, a canary, or the eyes of a watchful squirrel.

Later, on Christmas Eve, Santa would place one gift for each of us under the boughs. But we waited until after Christmas breakfast to open the gift. Each one of us in turn, sitting ceremoniously alone under the mighty tree, would unwrap paper and ribbon. There, under it, the huge tree would make me feel like a princess in the great halls of the Vikings.

But that year when I was eight, my father almost changed everything.

While he stamped through the snow, my mother and I gathered boxes of Christmas ornaments in the attic. The doctors had said my mother could have no children. But she had braved their prediction, and I was born. Now she was losing weight daily as she carried my little sister Monica who was to be born in two months. She couldn't bend very easily to the attic floor, and she could carry only one armful of boxes at a time. With the other arm, she steadied herself on the bannister up and down the stairs. But gradually we got everything down and placed on the piano bench near where the tree would stand. We unwrapped the ornaments. I put some apple cider and cloves in a pan on the stove, and sprinkled it with cinnamon to warm up my father when he returned.

At last I heard his boots crunch the snow in the yard. Behind him on the toboggan he pulled a huge tree. Even lying down, its branches pushed



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up as tall as he was! He picked up the tree and shook it to loosen the snow, saw me at the window, and grinned. Holding the tree in the middle of its trunk so none of it would drag, he started up the steps. I wrenched open the door for him. He carried the tree slowly and carefully, the heaviest trunk end first, through the door, down the hallway and into the living room.

My mother, on the davenport, saw first the heavy end of the tree, so wide and full that she couldn't see my father. Then she found his grin. "Wonderful," she told him.

My father laid the tree gently on the floor and began to take off his hat and boots. My mother got up slowly and we went to touch the tree. It was soft, not prickly. I pushed between its heavy boughs, and pulled them over my face. Already the room smelled of pine pitch and the woods.

My mother put her hands on my father's cheeks to thank him. He looked at her and at the tree and kissed her.

He led my mother then to a chair, across the room from where the tree would stand and helped her sit down. "See how it looks from there," he said.

He took the huge tree and began to raise it into place against the empty wall of the living room. The tree, with its mighty trunk on the hardwood floor, raised higher and higher till it hit the ceiling. Still, it wasn't standing straight. My father laughed. "Guess we'll have to cut a hole in the ceiling," he said.

"Gorgeous," my mother said, "the most magnificent tree you've ever found for us!" And, as my father proudly held the still tilting tree, my mom pushed herself off the chair and went to it. I could see little pink spots on her pale cheeks. She put her arms out around the tree, but it was so huge she could reach only one fourth of the way around it. "It's a

heavy, lush one you found, my love," she said.

Finally my father said, "You really need to rest awhile. Want to lie down while I cut the tree to fit the ceiling? Suzanne can be here with me. Then we'll trim the tree when you're rested."

So my mother went off to bed.

My father laid the tree back down and worked hard measuring the tree this way and that while he whistled, mostly air. But little bits of music too, here and there, sneaked out between the whistling.

I stood off at the side watching him and measuring, too, in my mind. If he took two feet at the top, we'd still have a tip. But then he'd have to take only a few inches off the bottom. That way he could save the huge, heavy lower branches.

Then, suddenly, my father took his ax and chopped three feet off the bottom. With it he severed the heaviest, fullest branches!

More bits of music sounded through his whistling as he lugged the mutilated tree bottom outside. Finally he stood up the tree. "Perfect," he said. The tree with its shining star would just touch the ceiling. But then, with his pruning shears, he began again to work on the tree, cutting and snipping at the rest of the long, lovely branches. Soon, around the tree lay a pile of boughs. He stomped through them as he kept clipping. Like a barber, he snipped until he cut off every branch that seemed even slightly out of place. When he finally quit clipping, he scooped great handfuls of boughs from the floor and took them out to the back yard where the mutilated tree bottom lay. Then he swept up the last needles from the floor. Finally, he stopped and stood back to admire his tree.

"Look at this, Suzanne," my father said. "Your mother and you never have had such a flawless tree. Your mother is so ill that I want to please



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her every way I can. Look how absolutely, wonderfully perfect this tree is." Then he took me by the hand and we walked to every corner of the room to check that the sleek cone rose perfectly balanced from tree stand to ceiling.

It was a totally different tree. Gone was the Princess of the Viking Hall. Not under this tree would we lie watching for the Christmas star.

Where then would we lie on Christmas time evenings? Where would we sit to open our gifts?

But it was beautiful in a new way. I squeezed my father's hand, and he lifted me on his shoulder. "Just wait till your mother sees it," he promised.

Then he put me down and went to call Mother. I waited on the couch, fearful for my father's joy.

Both of them came back together, my mother leaning on my father in illness and anticipation. When she reached the doorway, her hand flew to her lips, and she turned and put her face on my father's chest.

"What do you think, honey?" my father asked. "Isn't this the most perfect tree you've ever seen?" He lifted my mother's chin without taking his eyes from the tree and turned her face back toward the tree.

I could see both of their faces together, my father's proud and jubilant, my mother's shocked and sad. She closed her eyes against the tree.

Finally, my father, wondering at her silence, turned her face back to him. "Oh, honey," he said, "what is wrong?" Gently he helped her to the couch and sat there with his arm and body supporting her. "Talk to me, please."

"The tree you found in the woods," my mother finally said, "was so beautiful. It looked so lush and full of life." She looked at the tree standing thinly against the empty wall. "Trees don't grow like that." She pointed at the cone. "It's unnatural. It's like a starved emaciated, perfect model standing on a runway waiting for

applause."

"But, honey," my father said, "I only tried to make it a perfect tree."

My mother shook her head. "It's too changed. It's just an ornament now, a decoration."

"It is perfect, though, isn't it?" my father pleaded. "It's a new kind of beauty. We've tamed the wild and made it a work of art."

"It just makes me sad," my mother said. "It looks so fake. I liked it with its heavy branches poking out in not quite the right places. They'd make me want to smile. All their vibrant life made me feel good."

"And now it makes you sad?" my father asked.

"It's too perfect," my mother said.

They both sat quietly, my father's arm still around her. Then my mother straightened up against him and looked at me. "How about you, Suzanne. Do you like this new kind of tree?" She waited poised, stiff, for my answer.

I turned and looked at the tree. We could smell the woods in the silence. I couldn't say anything without hurting one of them. I tried to think of how to say that this skinny tree was like Grandma's tree. Grandma would think it was beautiful. But that wouldn't solve anything for us now. I wanted to say how hard my father had worked to please and surprise my mother, but that was only a way to postpone answering. I didn't want to choose a tree because by choosing it, I would seem to choose one of them.

They both knew.

"It's all right," my mother said. "It's just that I don't feel very well. I'm tired." She let go then and relaxed against my father. They rocked together for a minute and called me to them. The three of us rocked a bit in front of our perfect tree.

Finally my mother said, "I have to go back to bed. But in an hour I'll be up, and after supper we can trim our tree." She kissed me and my father and left us alone.

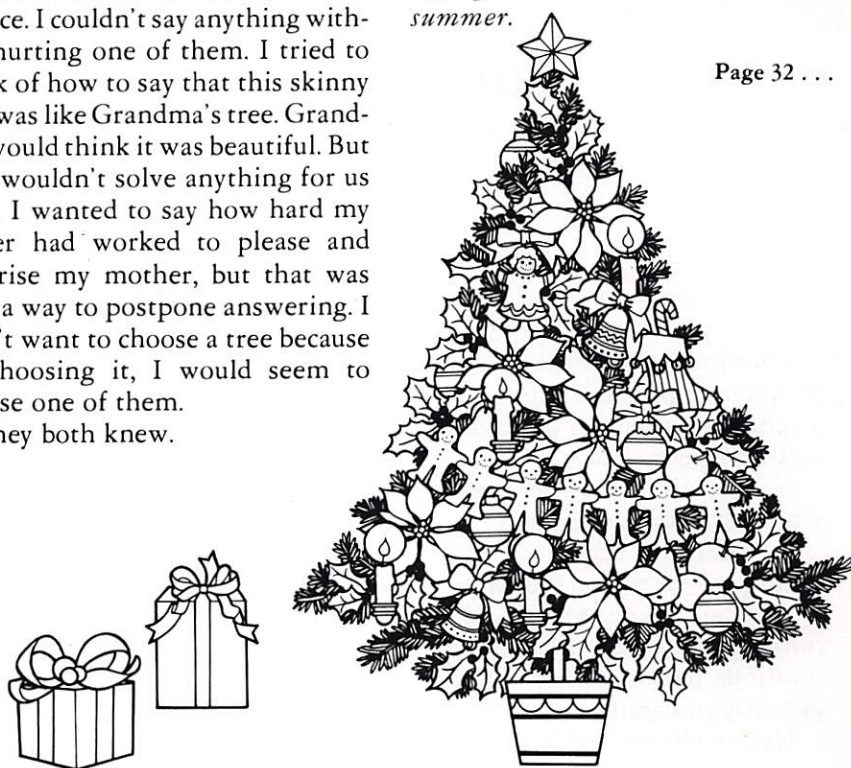
My dad took me on his lap and we both studied the tree. Then he gave me a squeeze and set me down.

He went then and pulled back on his lumberjack boots, his checkered wool jacket and his leather hat. He swung his long handled ax across his shoulders and bent down to me. "I'll find us the best tree in Grandpa's woods," he promised.

Mary Sue Koeppel  
Jacksonville, FL

Ms. Koeppel teaches at Westbrook College in Portland, Maine, each summer.

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## Jean Randall:

In Memoriam 1984

### Her Vision by Pat White

Entering Jean Randall's world is like stepping into a Jean Renoir movie, the dreamy, creamy colors of house and heroine caught in shafts of sunlight and shot with a soft-focus lens.

Her art is everywhere, an extension of herself, vibrating at the same rate.

"I'm part of a backdrop," she says, and it is true, for it's impossible to find the line where Jean Randall ends and her art begins. She has blended all the individual components of her home, garden and woods into a soothing, harmonious whole in which she herself is perfectly integrated.

Her mediums are her message and her message

springs from her deepest convictions:

"Everything that I do is a state of faith, a form of prayer. I celebrate Life, God, Mother Earth every time I pick up a piece of macrame string or crochet wool, or a block of wood and a chisel, or a paint brush dabbed with Chinese ink. It wasn't until I stopped floundering in my faith and realized that I really did have strong religious feelings that I stopped floundering in my art. After all, what is the point of art, if not to celebrate its Source?"

It is this kind of philosophy that gentle-eyed Jean spoons out to students, along with lessons in technique and a contagious joy about what she is doing.

"Everyone is an artist, if he is totally absorbed in

*The third-ever issue of BitterSweet (March 1978, now a scarce edition) carried a tribute to artist Jean Randall, painter and wood-block printer in Otisfield, Maine. It was written by her friend Pat White. Her artwork was on our cover in November of 1981 as well.*

*Over the course of time, Jean became my friend, too; she gave me much inspiration, moral support, and self-confidence. That was always Jean's way of giving: unbounded, with both hands, overflowing. Unfortunately for Jean, the depths of depression overflowed, too—they grew bigger than life. Experts would probably call her a "classic" manic-depressive personality. When she was up, she was sparkling, electric, creative like no one I've ever known. But when she was down, as Pat White once put it poetically, "her paintbrushes were dipped in Hell."*

*It was not easy being Jean Randall's friend; it was even harder being her family at those times. It was one of those depressions that took Jean's life this past fall—on the first day of autumn. We who loved her are sorry to lose her, but we cannot feel sad to see the end of her pain. Jean would not want us to, you see, for in her heart she believed in a good God who could create and care for everything, even the tormented who could not stop the pain. Her soul had fled there long ago.*

*I am choosing to reprint Pat's story of Jean's best days for two reasons: one to honor her talent to see joy and beauty in the world and to re-create it in her work. The second reason is that I believe we should remember these positive things about her life: the good she saw; the hope that always will remain for us.*

*M. M.*





*Above, "Royal Bar," woodblock print. Below, her studio and home in Otisfield, Maine.*







what he is doing, whether it be baking a loaf of bread or planting a garden or telling a story to a child. I try to convey to the children and adults that I teach that if they care about what they are doing and are doing it with love and the deepest attention, it is Art. They must feel free to express what is inside them, with no feeling of competition.

"In Casco recently, I taught a workshop for first, second and third graders, in which they made collages entitled, *My Song*. I wanted to make the point to them that the song that sprang from each of them and was expressed on paper was just as valid a piece of art as anything I, their teacher, was doing.

"I feel almost a missionary zeal about getting people to realize that artists are not a breed apart. The Master Artist is God and His seed is in all of us. Everyone should let loose the art in himself and experiment with expressing it in many different forms.

"Why be locked in to a particular medium? I could not possibly just stick to, say, oils and acrylics. Why limit yourself? Get into textures, shapes, shades, colors, raw materials."

Jean's blue eyes sparkle with intensity and her hands gesture in pantomime as she makes her point.

"I get high from the feel of things. I find utterly fascinating such diverse things as the roughness of a black walnut shell or the smoothness of a piece of marble. And the beauty in the grain and knots and bark of the various woods just goes on and on. Maybe it's a kind of kinetic sensuality I've developed, but actually we should use all our senses more. There is so much to see, to touch, to smell.

"As a teacher, I have no desire to make my pupils carbon copies of myself, but I do try to open their eyes and hearts. Artistically I want them to be free to find their own forte, so I expose them to everything\* from print-making to the potter's wheel. They draw, paint, carve, mold, even

*Above, "For All The Light." Below, left and middle, Jean's studio and Jean, working with an original oil painting and printing with pieces of styrofoam. Below, right, "La Jeune Fille."*





make their own dyes. Maybe by next summer I'll be able to add silk screening to the list."

The artist's drive and energy spring, no doubt, from her enthusiasm and sense of purpose, but she also credits megavitamins, lack of any white sugar consumption, and plenty of home-grown herbs and vegetables from her rock-lined garden.

"I'm as much in love with gardening as anything else I do. I love to get up in the morning," she says.

Jean does seem to run through her days like an excited child, as if there were a surprise waiting behind every bush.

"I never know what I'll see when I open my door. Maybe it'll be a chickadee or a pine branch, or a day like one last summer, straight out of a Japanese water color, all pink and grey. And a hummingbird was in the phlox."

Words tumble over each other as she describes her reactions to sights that most people would not even



notice.

"Even fog overwhelms me. It's like velvet. Like the world being wrapped in gauze. And when it lifts, ah! It's Brigadoon."

Page 39 . . .



*Below, the woodblock "Message." At right, a close-up detail. Above, "Mindful of This," with detail of the printed flowers below it. Jean's prints were unusual in the application of other printing techniques.*





## NEW ENGLAND FINERY

Their autumn brilliance discarded,  
Protecting the ground below,  
The trees stand bare and waiting  
For the winter winds and snow.

The greens are turning yellow,  
Their cones upon the ground.  
They'll make a lovely Christmas wreath  
When Yuletide rolls around.

The sensuous birches shiver  
As the driving winds attack,  
And bend them over deeply,  
Not caring if they crack.

The squirrels snuggle warmly  
Into hollow nests they've made  
In trees that will protect them,  
When the winter blizzards rage.

And then the lovely crystals  
Of glistening snow begin,  
Like tiny teardrops falling  
On the icy breath of wind.

Then March arrives with its breezes,  
Fighting to take command,  
Destroying the icy cover  
Till it lays bare the land.

The farmer begins to plan ahead,  
When winter's past—for now—  
He gathers his seeds for planting  
And readies his sturdy plow.

Trees then begin their budding,  
Healthy sprouts from limb to limb  
Soon burst forth with vigor.  
And the winter's memories dim.

April showers and lilacs  
Bring fragrance to the air.  
Everything wears a lacy green,  
Seedlings grow with care.

The summer heat is heavy,  
With vacation time at hand,  
Ice cream, swimming, camping—  
Concerts by the local band.

Then autumn once again arrives,  
The leaves are flaming red  
And brown and gold and orange.  
Acorns drop upon your head.

We turn once more to wintertime  
When fall at last is spent.  
We cherish each new season—  
An exciting new event!

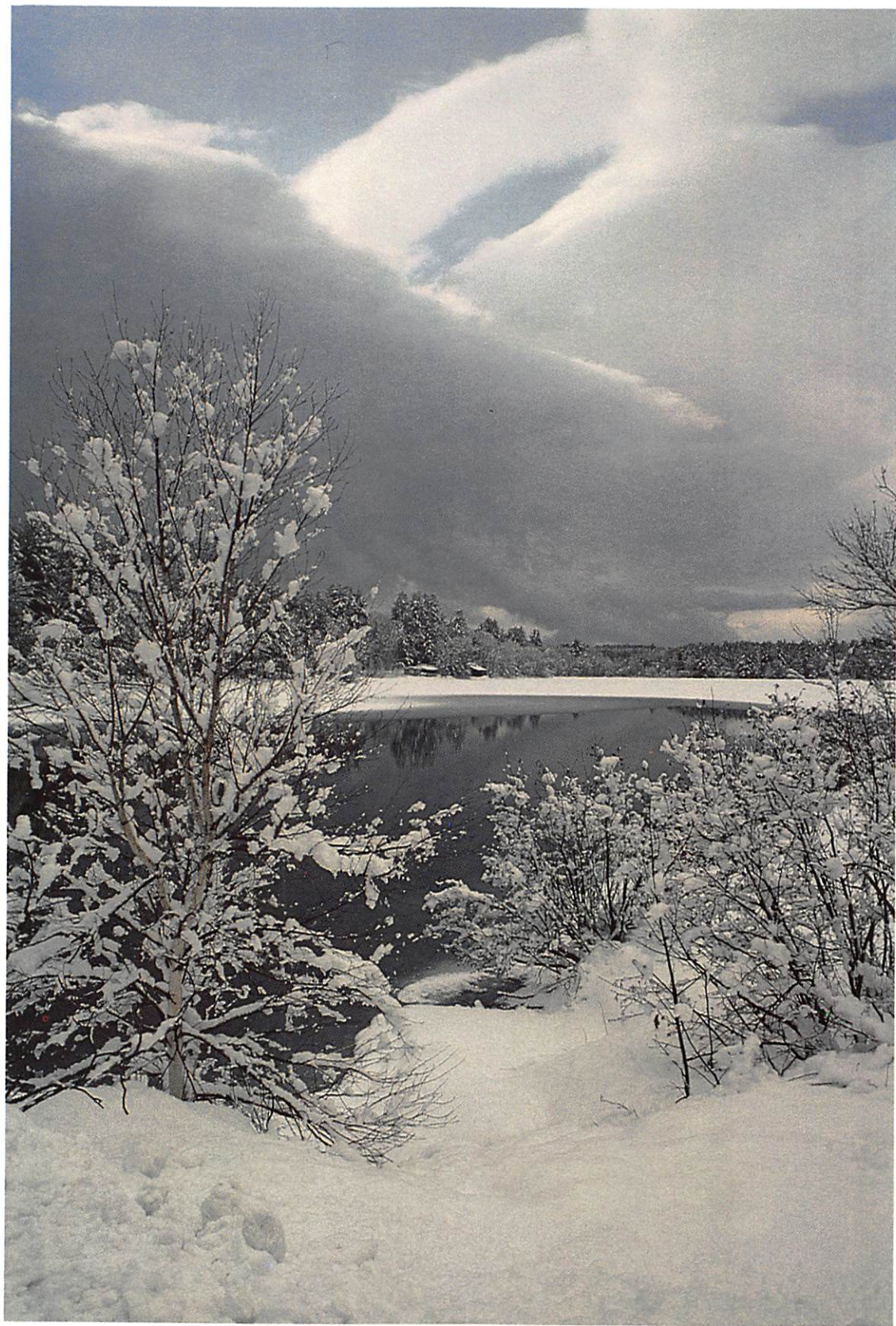
*Loyce C. Vickery  
Portsmouth, N.H.*



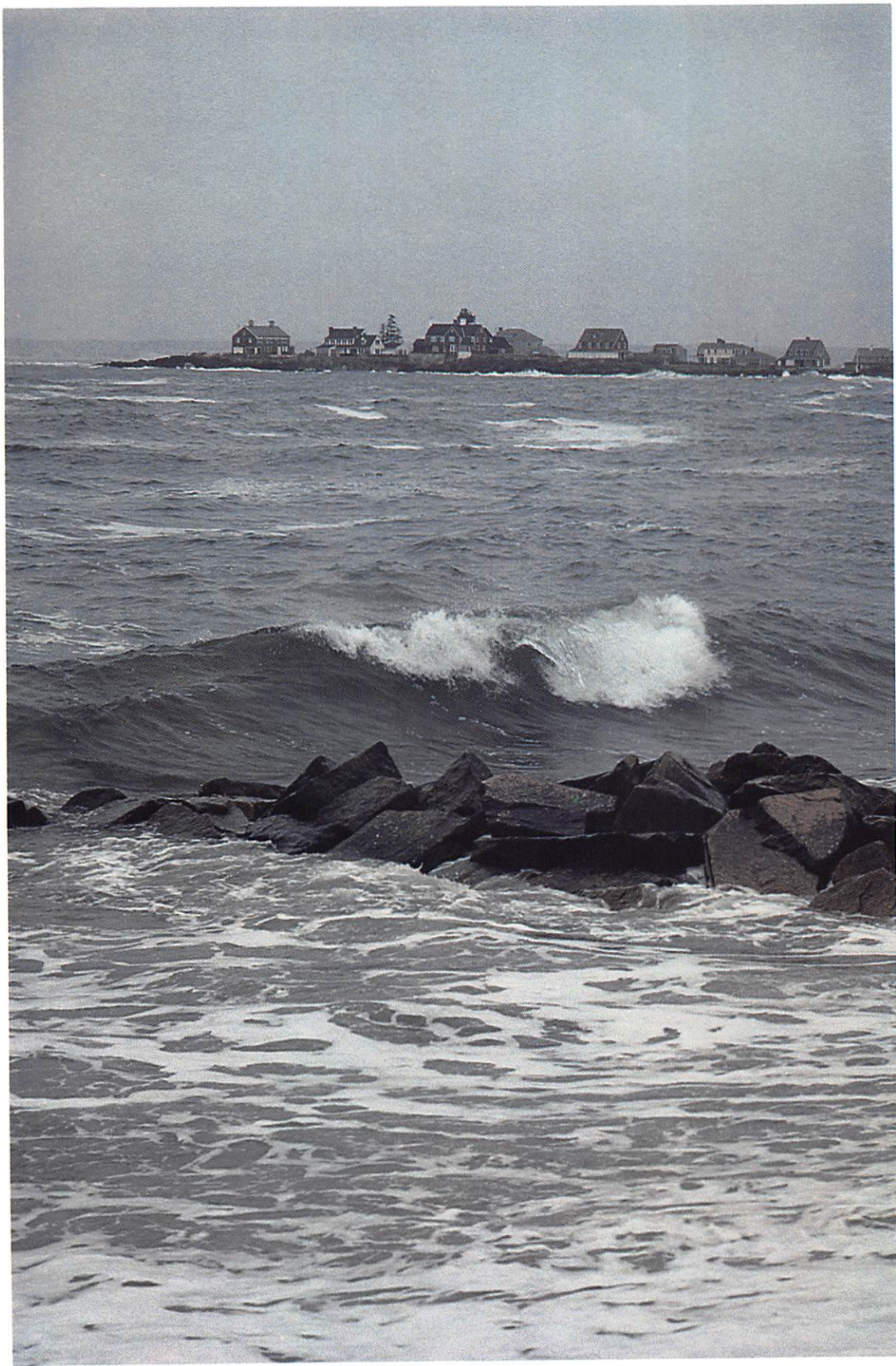




















## "HOW I LEARNED TO LOVE WINTER" A Flatlander Learns To Ski — Part I

by Lauren MacArthur

*Last winter, our reporter, who calls herself a "non-athletic, non-exercising, forty-year-old flatlander," spent several weeks at Attitash Mountain in the Mt. Washington Valley. The folks at Attitash claimed they could teach anyone to ski. Lauren set out to make them prove it.*

I have often been called a "flatlander" since my arrival in the northcountry. My native Massachusetts, I've been told, is flat.

I've tried to lay claim to Bunker Hill, Prospect Hill, Mt. Wachusett and the Berkshires, but no one has been very impressed. And, as I hail from eastern Massachusetts, my whole argument has been more a self-defense mechanism than anything else.

What I didn't know was that northern New Englanders have a real test to determine just how true a "flatlander" one is. It's called "learning to ski."

When the friendly folks at Attitash heard this forty-

year-old, non-athletic, non-exercising Massachusetts flatlander had never had skis on her feet, they were unbelieving. They offered to rectify this incomprehensible situation.

I had two weeks to assemble the necessary ingredients to ski. The boots, poles, skis, and instructor would be supplied by Attitash. But the really important stuff—the designer clothing—I was to take care of myself.

I figured I could round all this up through family and friends. It was foolish to go out and buy it all; after all, I might not continue this sport, and my Scottish heritage demanded I approach this venture prudently.



You would have thought I was assembling a wedding instead of a ski lesson. I ended up with the proverbial "something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue." Actually, everything was old and borrowed—except my son's new ski hat. I was a sight to see in my daughter's old jogging pants with the stripes down the side and a hole in the knee. My cousin's flowered thermal underwear peeked prominently through the hole—a little designer touch.

But the Vikings ski hat gave me just that little flair I needed, tucked down in my ski vest with the pom-pom hanging out, the way *real* skiers do it. The "something blue" we'll discuss later.

#### Lesson One — "Devant Ski"

At Attitash, I was welcomed by Ellen Chandler and Sandy Beherrel, ski director. They quickly introduced me to Hans Ettel and David Eliason in the ski rental shop. They sized me up at a glance and provided me with the skis, poles, and what I, at first, thought was the Swiss answer to Chinese torture—the boots.

As all true "highlanders" know, the boots keep your feet right where they should be. And the stiff boot back forces the knees to bend in that skiing position we've all seen on television—making the best use of your "low center of gravity," they told me. The trouble was, in order to get to the small beginners' mound, I had to negotiate a flight of stairs. Since they didn't have a chairlift to get out of the building, I somehow walked (rather like a monkey) the distance that at first appeared insurmountable.

I made it! There I was introduced to my ski instructor, Jack Coffey—also a Massachusetts native, but one whom, I'm sure, no one has called "flatlander" in years.

My first instruction was how to separate my skis, put them straight

down in front of me, straddle them, and put them on. Lifting one foot at a time (and knocking the snow off my boots), I was to point my toes down into the front of the ski, then come down straight with my heels to snap the clamp that would hold my feet into the skis. Easy, you think?

Not for this flatlander. I was sure my first lesson would be over before I reached the beginners' mound. The muscles in the back of the legs were screaming for relief. Pointing my toes downward when the back of the boots wouldn't give took all the determination I could muster. I was exhausted.

I was sure this would be the end of lesson one. But, oh no, it was only ten minutes past ten...and this lesson wouldn't end until noon! All I could think about was sitting down—an impossible task. Jack was explaining what we were going to do. All I could think about was, "Let's get on with it, let's move. If I have to stand here another second, I'll collapse."

Jack finally showed me how to push off, and told me what he wanted me to do: just go easy, look straight ahead, and come straight to him (rather like teaching a baby to walk). I started. Jack was encouraging me to look at him, but to no avail. My eyes were rivetted on my skis. I was entranced by them.

I made a marvelous right turn and skied straight out onto the pavement of the parking lot.

That was good, Jack told me. I hadn't fallen down, anyway. I supposed as long as there was a parking lot handy to stop me, I'd have no problem at all with this sport.

We tried again...and again, and again. Jack—a very patient and gracious man—actually did wonders with me. Each time we'd go a little higher on the mound. I got my first fall over with in no time.

And then I felt wonderful. I relaxed, I wasn't tired anymore. And

when the sun peeked over the mountain and shone down on us, I almost felt religious. I actually did some of the things Jack told me to do. I learned to walk up hill without sliding backwards. And I actually skied—a little.

But then I got cocky. My subconscious said, *This is a piece of cake!* And promptly, I did three nosedives in a row.

"You do that real well," Jack told me, referring to my great ability to "land flat."

"I just wanted a little rest," I responded.

Remember that "something blue" I mentioned earlier? I discovered little patches of that—here and there—the next day. But I was determined to return.

#### Lesson Two

Maybe I'm a glutton for punishment, but I showed up for my second ski lesson at Attitash. My muscles were finally quieted down and the "patches of blue" I acquired during my first lesson were pretty well faded.

Hans Ettel in the ski rental shop again outfitted me with skis, poles, and boots—which didn't feel quite so alien this time. I was able to walk in them a little less like a monkey this time, and I made it up the stairs to the outside (still no chairlift there) with no incident at all.

I almost made it to where I needed to be before I fell. But I didn't get too upset. After all, you need to get that first fall over with to enjoy the rest of the lesson, right? I gathered up my skis, poles, and dignity, and trudged on—hoping no one had noticed my downfall, which was something akin to the elephant dance in "Fantasia."

Jack Coffey, my strong, not-so-silent, unflappable ski instructor must be a glutton for punishment, too. He was there when I arrived.

We started right in getting me re-





*Lauren and ski instructor Jack Coffey on the Attitash chairlift.*

acquainted with what he hoped I had learned last week. But the snow was different this week. Attitash received some natural snow; they made some of their own; and then the rain and cold weather produced a slippery crust. The "snow people"—the ones who make it—were at work churning it up into a nice powder. But, as they were not through with their work, I was skiing (did I say skiing?) from crusty to lumpy to fine powder snow.

It takes a little negotiating. Jack made me aware of the different textures right away. And he reminded me to keep my feet "quiet."

I didn't. Almost immediately, I headed for my favorite spot. I was determined *not* to end up in that parking lot again. So—using my "low center of gravity"—I went down.

The position I landed in was not only undignified, it was impossible to get up from. Gentle Jack rescued me again. But at least I didn't end up in that parking lot again!

Actually, I did make some progress. For the first time, I could feel myself having some control over my skis. I finally felt the difference between

"pressing" with my knees for direction, and "moving the heels out" to control speed.

After several fairly successful attempts at turning and stopping, Jack suggested we take the chairlift up the novice hill. I'd never been on a chairlift before. Jack explained how we were going to get on—it doesn't stop for you.

You wait for a chair to pass you, then you ski into position—quickly—before the next chair kind of sneaks up behind you. Then, if all goes right, you just sit down. I was a little slow, but I made it—with Jack's urging.

It felt great to be sitting down. And it was beautiful, gliding up the side of the mountain. We crossed little streams and big boulders and... "Oh, my gosh!" I said out loud.

"You just thought about 'how do we get off?' didn't you?" asked Jack.

I admitted my concern. "That's easy," he laughed, "I push you!"

Of course, he didn't. He explained that I should stand as we arrived at the landing platform. Then I was to use my poles, push myself off, and ski down the ramp.

I was nervous about this part. I had

visions of missing my cue and circling the mountain forever, sort of like the poor fellow in the song of several years ago. Do you remember it? The one about Charlie on the MTA in Boston. He was never able to get off and "his fate is still unlearned."

But Jack hollered at me to "MOVE!" and I made it. We were there. Not exactly the top of the mountain—but it was certainly "top" enough for me.

The ski lodge below looked like a doll house. But I could still see my parking lot down there waiting for me. Jack suggested I only concentrate on the distance from one mound to the next. And we skied just that way—from mound to mound—until we reached the bottom of the mountain.

That's a good lesson, I thought, not just for skiing, but for making it through life in general.

Well, we did pretty well. Jack skied backwards (can you imagine anyone skiing backwards down a mountain?) and I was impressed. I followed, going straight ahead, of course, trying to do as he instructed.

I did pretty well until another skier came near me. I have this terrible fear of hitting someone else. I managed to ski out around him, but now I was headed straight down the mountain and picking up speed.

Panic set in. I couldn't even think. Somewhere in the background I could hear Jack saying, "Sit down, Lauren." But I wasn't really hearing him. "Sit down," he said, a little louder. Then, "SIT DOWN, I SAID!"

That did it; I sat directly down. I was really scared. Jack calmly helped me up and reminded me to ski "from mound to mound"—and to keep my eyes on him.

From there on we did fairly well. I paid attention and looked at Jack. Since he wasn't too bad to look at, that command wasn't too hard to



follow. We made it down that mountain.

Of course, at the very end, I got moving a little too fast, and for my finale, I tripped over Jack's ski! Oh, well. Thanks, Jack, Ski ya next week!

### Lesson Three

After two stalled skiing lessons, due to Mother Nature showing us who was boss, I finally got back to the serious business.

I was "old hat" at Attitash by this time—no one paid too much attention to me. I couldn't expect everyone to wait on me forever. Sooner or later, I had to do things for myself. And guess what? I did it. That's improvement, isn't it? It's tough, the first time you have to buckle your own boots.

There were six of us for the lesson that day. We went immediately to the chairlift and ascended the hill. Jack said to steer right when we got off. That was something new; we'd always steered left before. We were to try a different hill.

I was definitely apprehensive about this. I like my old hill. I've seen it before and I'm used to it. I know exactly where I should fall on it.

It didn't take me long to discover where I should fall on the new hill, though; as a matter of fact, I found three very nice places to accomplish this feat on the way down. So, by the time we reached the bottom, I'd made friends with a new hill.

The next time up, Jack decided we should return to my old hill. Does that tell you anything? Well, anyway, the visitors were very impressed with the graceful way I fall.

Seriously, though, it was a wonderful day at Attitash. Jack taught us how to serve drinks while skiing downhill. Actually, it was pretend—the idea is to hold your ski poles together horizontally in front of you, as if you were carrying a platter. And you can only serve people downhill. In that manner, you are sup-

posed to learn to keep your upper body facing in the right direction, no matter which way you turn.

Anyway, Jack really accomplished a lot with us. We made several nice turns. He emphasized keeping the upper body erect and "quiet"—a favorite word of his. Between "quiet" feet and a "quiet" upper body, if I get anymore quiet, he'll have to wake me at the end of the lesson.

It all pays off in the end. And not the end you are thinking of! Believe it or not, on my last run, I skied all the way down the hill without falling once.

Jack was impressed. I could tell just by the way he told me to "get out of your skis—quick!"

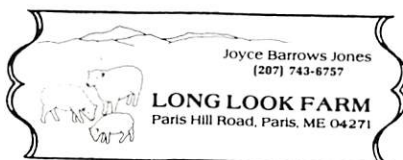
I felt wonderful, even with Jack's little bit of sarcasm. So, some of us went for a mini-lesson in "Apres-Ski"—something I plan to learn a lot more about later. Merry Christmas!

continued next month

### *Cilla's Shoppe*

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# Goings On

## MAINE EVENTS

### Art

*Dianne Hooper*, watercolorist, on display in Hupper Gallery, Hebron, Maine, Jan. 6-31. Gallery hrs. 8-3 Mon.-Fri., 7:30-9:30 p.m. Sun.-Thurs. when school is in session.

*Multi-Media Works by Art Faculty* of the University of Maine at Augusta, Jewett Hall Gallery, U.M.A., through Dec. 20. For hrs., call 207-622-7131, ext. 271.

Paintings by *Katherine A. Muench* of Freeport, Maine, at the Learning Resources Center, Univ. of Maine at Augusta thru Jan. 7. For hrs., call 207-622-7131, ext. 222.

"*Textiles Through Time*" at Farnsworth Library and Art Museum, Rockland, Maine, Dec. 7-Jan. 27. Exhibit by Maine Guild of Spinners and Weavers. Contemporary handmade Maine fabrics juxtaposed with historical functional textiles. Demonstrations, lectures and tours for children.

### LPL & APL

*Sunday Film Series*: Dec. 2 *Sugar Cane Alley* (Martinique in the 1930's); Feb. 3 *The Return of Martin Guerre* (French). New location Auburn Mall; new time 5 p.m.!

*Light Opera*, Fri. Dec. 14, 7:30 p.m. at Schaeffer Theatre, Bates College, Lewiston, Me. Connecticut Opera Express brings you Giancarlo Menotti's "Amahl and the Night Visitors" with the Androscoggin Chorale.

*Chamber Music*, Fri. Jan. 25, 8 p.m., United Baptist Church, Lewiston, The Muir String Quartet, supported by the National Endowment for the Arts.

## VERMONT EVENTS

### Annual December Events

Dec. 1, *Montpelier Ski & Skate Sale*, Recreation Center, 9-2 p.m. For information, call 802-223-5141 (Always first Sat. in Dec.)

Dec. 1-2, *Shelburne Celebration of an Early Vermont Christmas*, including costumed guides, horse-drawn carriage rides, and carolers at the Shelburne Museum, 10-4 p.m., \$2/17 & under free. Phone 802-985-3346 for information.

Dec. 6-9, *Woodstock Christmas Wassail*, with horse-drawn wagon rides, concerts, caroling, and more. Tentative dates; phone 802-457-3555.

Dec. 26-28, *Manchester Candlelight Tours*, with sleigh ride, refreshments, at Historic Hildene, 5-9 p.m. \$3.50/under 15 \$1/under 6 or members free. 802-362-1788.





*Pictured on this page is the annual Christmas Fair at First Congregational Church, South Paris, Maine. Held in early December each year, the fair features hand-knitted items, handmade ornaments, fudge, good old store cheese, wreaths, and a bake sale. Look for the local fairs near you.*

#### ... BitterSweet Views

a baby (especially in 1984!). It's also necessary to have a lot of love, a lot of patience, willingness to work, and dreams for the future.

This served to remind me of another little family, thousands of years ago, traveling homeless in the desert, with an animal, a baby, and some hopes for the future of humankind. Those hopes haven't changed much.

This Christmas season, there are a lot of new babies among the people I know. I'd like to wish happy holidays to the families of Jonathan Mattson, Joshua Chaplin; to Brian Pike and Jason Noyes of Harrison and Waterford, Maine; and to baby Jon Alan Bonior down in Scarborough. Happy New Year in advance to the Haynes baby expected in January (and look, folks,

don't you think somebody better start having girls?)

Happy holidays to all of you readers from the staff of BitterSweet, and from me and my children, Tracy and Tom. And, if this rambling doesn't make a lot of sense to you, that's okay—remember, I'm crazy!

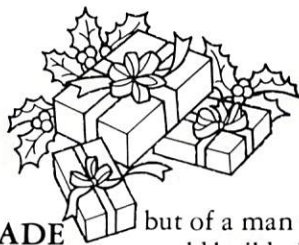
*Nancy Marcotte*

P.S. Two footnotes to last month's cattle stories. The bull featured in the story on the Belted Galloways was "Rousseau Farm Rory," now sold to Rene Lemaire of Dunham, Quebec, Canada for breeding.

The second note is an apology to Henry Allen of Hebron, Maine—a dairy farmer still. We neglected to mention how strenuous a retirement he has since selling the farm to his son Bob. Henry works the farm every day he's there, spring to fall.







## "THINGS" HOMEMADE

Homemade is a fine word. It is as useful, solid, and straightforward as the *things* it describes. Yet, our dictionaries tell us that homemade is synonymous with simple, plain, and often crude country work.

This definition bothers me. It is not enough, but what is there is worse than nothing. I object especially to crude, though simple and plain—normally honest words—are used in a fashion that implies products of inferior quality. It is another way of saying that country beans and fish chowder are less toothsome than liver pate because they are less complex. Or that unadorned things are of a lower value than frilly store-bought items.

If, in fact, that is how modern lexicographers view things homemade, I can say with absolute certainty that they have never eaten *real* corned beef hash doused liberally with *real* ketchup while watching their satisfied reflections in the patina of a *real* oil-rubbed table. They have never been warmed by home-knitted wool sweaters with shrinkage built into the extra long sleeves and waist. They are poorer for never having caught brook trout with homemade fly rods shaved thin and flexible with tiny homemade planes.

My grandfather used that type of plane to shape the rod that hangs on the wall above my desk. He made this fly rod, during the winter of 1899, from split bamboo, cork, and metal. Beneath the rod's yellowed varnish, the original silk still secures wire line guides where my grandfather wrapped them. But the rod is flawed; there is an unevenness over its length and an imbalance at its grip. It is not the work of a specialist,

but of a man who with equal facility could build a barn or tie a fly the size of a mosquito. Neither would be perfect, but they would serve a purpose and they would last.

Like my grandfather's fly rod, most things homemade are a blend of form and function built as a means to an end. Other than a jury-rig to meet the needs of the moment, there is little crudeness to these things. Although they are not art, many things homemade have an artist's touch, a style that lacks needless ornamentation. Yet, they can be objects of more than passing beauty and often much more than serviceable country handiwork. Certainly, they go far beyond the "lick and a promise" definition in Webster. What is evident is an honest simplicity that is the core of things homemade, an integrity of task and product that is ageless.

Not too long ago (I can't specify the exact amount of time, which seems to diminish in direct proportion to the gray in my hair), there was disagreement over the prestige and worth of homemade versus store-bought items. We were caught in a time of changing values when it was chic, very uptown to have things store-bought. If your mother made her own pies and pickles and clothing you were considered a "hick." If she did a few of those things, it brought you to just this side of "rural," but on the way up. And Heaven forbid that your father made some of your toys; that was proof in the "hayseed pudding" that your family was either too poor to buy them or hopelessly country.

Store-bought. What the word usually meant was bread with the taste and texture of sawdust, chairs that collapsed when a fat uncle sat in them, or sweaters that disintegrated

during the first wash. Some things haven't changed. Like store-bought comforters whose fill seems to gravitate lumpily into the corner of each pocket and whose sole function is to slide to the floor at two o'clock in the morning. The flip side of store-bought is a patchwork quilt made by my grandmother before I was born. I still have it, wrapped safely in a moth-proof trunk. That its scrap material and lint fill can turn away the deepest cold more than fifty years after the last stitch was applied bears witness to its durability.

Things homemade usually came from family friends and relatives. They were given as holiday gifts or as special gestures of affection. A favorite uncle, perhaps, would hand you a tooled belt attached to a gleaming buckle, and at the same time make light of the gift. "Oh, they're not much, just scraps of leather and an old harness buckle. But, at least your pants won't fall down like they did at last year's reunion." The "not much" belt and buckle invariably showed a level of craftsmanship that would make the Hickok assembly line cringe in embarrassment.

In most families, time was more available than money and the cost of things homemade was mainly in spare evening hours. These items were never made quickly, but on occasion the time involved passed from acceptable to ridiculous. I am thinking of The Sweater.

Years ago, a maiden aunt sent me a Christmas card promising one of her famous sweaters. It was to arrive at a later date, a phrase my aunt used as a chronic debtor uses "the check is in the mail." The "later date" spanned six years, doubling her previous record for a pair of mittens. In this case, puberty intervened, adding at least three sizes to my hands, while



the mittens remained pre-pubescent in dimensions. Rumor had it that my aunt was knitting her way through life with more than her share of dropped stitches. That may have been true, but she could make sweaters. Mine was a masterpiece of half-inch thick wool knitted tight enough to hold water. One day's use convinced me that it was too valuable to waste on social occasions, so I gave it a top spot in my duffle of outdoor gear. I wore The Sweater for fifteen years until it disappeared, consumed evidently by my house, as socks are often eaten by clothes dryers. Other than severe ring-around-the-collar, it showed minimal signs of wear though I had used it for everything from a horse blanket to a totesack.

Things homemade impress me, at least in part, because I seem to be incapable of making them. I can glue a table or shim a chair, but these are shaky, make-do efforts that cry for a talented hand. I don't have the gift, the knowing fingers that sense exactly how much wood to shave from the curve of a bass plug or when the steamed warp in a rocker back is perfect. I would enjoy making my own sweaters, but the knit and purl maneuvers elude me. At this moment, I am sitting at a homemade desk thoroughly mystified by its tight corners and smooth pulling drawers. The trees from which this desk was made could not have been more solid. Each day, as I rest my elbows on the desk's polished surface, I salute the craftsman who built it.

I love to look at things homemade. I enjoy having them around me to touch when I feel the need, or for the simple pleasure of being in the same room with them. They relax me and allow my mind to turn reflective. The unencumbered look, the lack of busyness of things homemade, have a gentling effect on me.

Today, we live in a high technology, commercial world where time is no longer the cheapest commodity.

We tend to buy items rather than make them, though few of us would have the knowledge even if we had the time. But there are still things homemade, things made by one person at their own home workbench or kitchen counter. They are jobs done once and done properly because someone loved doing them—like duck decoys carved and painted individually, a saddle that was a year in the making, chairs without a nail or screw in them, and food with a taste that eases across the palate like a pleasant dream.

Things homemade, now as in the past, have the spirit of their makers in them, a uniqueness and pride of task that carries each item beyond simple and plain and certainly crude. Yes, I disagree with the dictionaries and so, I believe, would Noah Webster. Nearly everything in his day was homemade.

*Joseph Arnette  
Kennebunkport, ME*

## CHRISTMAS GIVING

Have you seen those ads for computers on television? The young man goes off to college and fails miserably because his parents did not buy him a computer. What a mean, guilt-producing advertisement.

As Christmas nears, we are given more of the same treatment, and children are not exempt. They are told that if they love their parents or siblings, they will buy them a variety of expensive gifts. "Wouldn't Mom love this beautiful silk blouse?" What child has enough money to buy a silk blouse, perfume, a brief case or cuff links?

If Christmas is a time for giving, let's use our Yankee ingenuity and give our own time and energy. It seems to me that giving of ourselves is worth more than all the mass-produced gifts put together.

Here are some Christmas gift ideas

for children to make or do for their families. All they cost is time, effort and love.

1. Give an I.O.U. to get at least one dinner for the family during the Christmas vacation.

2. Give an I.O.U. to shovel the walk and driveway this winter, without being asked.

3. Do the dishes for a week.

4. If you knit or crochet, make a scarf or hat.

5. Write a poem especially for someone. Mount it on a piece of construction paper or on a varnished square of wood.

6. Give an I.O.U. to weed the garden next summer. Keep your promise.

7. Give an I.O.U. to mow the lawn next summer.

8. Give an I.O.U. to wash the family car as soon as the weather permits.

9. Do the laundry, washing and ironing, for a month.

10. Promise to get an "A" in at least one subject in school and keep your promise. That will make your teacher happy, too.

11. Give an I.O.U. to read to a younger brother or sister for half an hour every day. It will improve your reading, too.

12. Give an I.O.U. to a younger brother or sister to help with his/her homework.

*Abigail Walsh  
Gouldsboro, ME*

## CHOOSING A PUPPY

So the big day has finally arrived. The day you will choose your first puppy. But are you aware of the responsibility owning and caring for a puppy really is? After all, puppies require training, proper nutrition and most importantly, a loving home. A home where he will love and protect not only you, the most important person in his life, but his home as well, which is considered by him to



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peace be with you

be his own personal territory!

I shall attempt, through this article, to put forth a guide that will help you to choose the puppy that is just right for you and also teach you to care for him properly; so you and he will enjoy many happy, healthy years together, and by doing so, will convince Mom and Dad that they didn't make a mistake in allowing you to have a puppy in the first place!

My first rule: always buy from a reputable breeder. A reputable breeder is a person who has a good reputation raising and selling certain breeds that he specializes in. He can tell you all you need to know about your puppy, and about his pedigree. A pedigree is your puppy's family tree. If you buy "puppy" from one of these knowledgeable breeders, you will be able to meet your puppy's mother and in some cases his father. You couldn't do that in a pet store. A puppy's mother and father are called a Dam and Sire. You can get a very good idea of what your puppy will grow up to look like from his dam and sire. And even what type of personality he is likely to have! You can usually find a listing of good breeders in the classified section of your newspaper. It's also a good idea to visit more than one breeder or kennel, before you are ready to make your final decision.

When you are looking at a litter of puppies (a litter is what we call puppies that are brothers and sisters who are born at the same time), look for the puppy that has bright, clear eyes, a wagging tail and a shiny coat. A puppy who is friendly and is not afraid to approach you eagerly. Choose the puppy who is not too small or too large for his breed. If you will remember these important facts, then you will bring home a healthy, happy-go-lucky puppy, I'm sure!

Once you get "puppy" home, it is important that he is given plenty of time to acquaint himself to his new

home. Remember, he is just a baby and will need a great deal of nap time, just like human babies do. He must learn his limits. It is an excellent idea, at this time, to confine him to a certain area of the house. The kitchen is a good place until he learns his house manners. He should have a bed and toys of his own. With his own toys he won't be chewing on the furniture which will get him into trouble with Mother, or hurt himself by choking.

Your puppy is a growing baby and as a baby he needs proper nutrition. It takes a puppy a full twelve months and sometimes longer to mature, especially if he is of one of the larger breeds. It is best to feed "puppy" foods that have been specifically prepared to meet the demanding needs of a puppy's growing body. Your puppy may look fully grown, but don't be fooled by his size. He is still growing inside his body and his mind. He should be eating at least two meals a day (larger breeds will eat probably three times a day), until his first birthday.

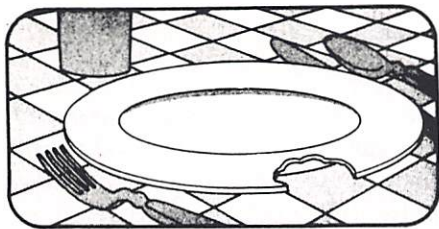
Don't forget exercise! Play ball with "puppy" and walk him as often as you can. Walking is not only GREAT for "puppy," but for your growing body as well. Walking will also help with his house manners... MOTHER will appreciate that! Oh... don't forget to name him!!!

Next time we'll talk more about those all important HOUSE MAN- NERS!

*Lois J. Mello  
Swansea, MA*







## Food For Thought

by Lucia Owen

### COUNTRY ROADS

Ever since they took down the Burma Shave signs, things have been rough for the one who isn't driving. In Maine, you spend most of your time in the car going somewhere or coming back. Those Burma Shave signs really helped, especially if the driver is the usual taciturn Yankee type. (*Dinah doesn't/Treat him right/But if he'd shave/Dinah might/Burma Shave.*) Something like that gave the passenger entertainment to anticipate and savor, good for at least fifteen miles.

I spend so much time in the passenger seat, I think of myself as She Who Must Be Conveyed. I am swept on and on through tunnels of green that slowly turn red, then orange, then brown. But I get tired of watching leaves and identifying trees. So I have developed lots of games to play inside my head for those silent stretches on an average ride.

One thing to do is look up every side road and wonder where it comes out or what kind of house you'd find at the end of it. What would happen if, one day, you just took off and drove up every side road between, say, Trap Corner and Wayne, Maine? It might take a week, and who knows where you'd end up?

A friend, stumping for a seat in the state legislature, had to do just what I have described. He knocked on a door somewhere in Andover Surplus, I think, and no one was home. But when he turned around, he was ringed by twenty or so large turkeys. Getting back to the car tested his skill as a negotiator when outnumbered.

Between wondering about the side roads, you can let your imagination go on the rocks and puckerbrush along the shoulder. I discovered this form of entertainment by accident, just letting my mind drift as we rode along. Suddenly I sat up, convinced there was a large owl ahead, just where the woods met the line of the highway department mowing. My husband slowed down—and it was a stump. But I've seen deer, bears, serpents, scorpions, dragons, and once even an alligator. I don't usually yell at Jim to stop any more. Perhaps with a camera you could photograph ordinary roadside slash so that it looked like the things I see. Project for next summer.

The time of year determines how you play with the road whizzing past. In late summer and into October, I check people's gardens. If they are neatly furrowed and weeded, I can enjoy a good dose of envy and frustration. Here I am sitting in this stupid car when I should be home weeding my beans. The corn is a mess, too. But then I see a garden where only the broccoli is taller than the weeds, and I feel reprieved.

The weather in the fall determines how I look at other people's gardens as well. By this time of year, the garden is full of all sorts of vegetables that have to be harvested and stored in a number of complicated and time-consuming ways. Are my onions dry enough to bring in? Is the squash? Will it rain before we get home?

When driving late in the day in September, what I look for is whether or not people have covered their

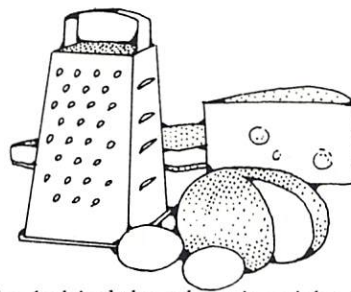
tomatoes. What I've seen between West Paris and Bethel determines the degree of panic when we arrive home. My poor husband, with no idea of the riotous flow of my imagination when I seem merely to be gazing out the car window, often sits in complete bewilderment once he has pulled into the drive. I may leap out and frantically begin rummaging in the garage for the assorted tomato blankets. Or command that every tomato be picked *now*, before we even unload the car.

There is, however, one occupation when sitting in the passenger seat that is serene and gratifying. It produces no frenzy of the irrational and leaves Jim in peace because nothing happens when we get home. The only thing this game requires is miles and miles of woods. No human habitation need intrude. The woods along the road open up as the leaves fall and I can see the bones of the landscape with increasing clarity. I quietly look out my window and try to spot the perfect Christmas tree.

As anyone knows who still gets a Christmas tree in the woods, finding the right one can take a whole afternoon, or several days. So I scout meticulously as we drive along. There are lots of choices to make. Can I justify taking the top of a big tree? Or do I have to get the height right as well as the shape? What kind do we want?

I remember describing a neighbor's cut-in-the-wild tree to my father-in-law. I enthused over its fullness and symmetry, then mentioned that it was a spruce. "Hm," he said. "Anybody can find a good spruce."





Everything implied in that statement is present in my mind's eye as I scan the evergreens revealed in the November woods. I usually locate three or four trees per trip. I honestly plan to return to certain trees I have scouted when the time is right. I describe the trees I have seen, and even where, with accuracy. But somehow we always wind up going to the same wood lot and beginning the process of selection with no previous research. Oh, well. At least I know where we can find one if there's nothing to cut here.

The real problem with being the passenger is that the passenger gets to do the cooking once we're home so the driver can relax over the paper after the day's exertion. This means that whomever-it-is has to do some pretty quick thinking, especially if we haven't been shopping or there's no defrosted hamburger around. The driver should be pampered too, so the dinner has to be special as well as quick. There are several choices. Spaghetti is an option, not made with tomato sauce because that takes too long to simmer properly.

### Quick Pasta

Other things can be tossed with pasta for a really fast meal that is a bit more than ordinary. Sliced zucchini, mushrooms, and a bit of onion and garlic can be sautéed, held together with some cream and parmesan cheese, and tossed with the pasta. It's easy enough to dream up other variations, depending on what you've got. I've seen recipes that use cauliflower with pasta, though I've never tried it; and, unless the cauliflower is out of the garden and therefore cheap, I'm not likely to, either.

### Quick Quiche

Another dish that will make anyone feel refreshed and cared for after

a day behind the wheel is quiche. It is a bit fancier than an omelet and there are usually leftovers if there are just two of you. Quiches are chic at the moment, as America discovers croissants and decent French bread. The dish is embarrassingly easy to make and also gives the cook a chance to be imaginative. If you mentally flip through the contents of the refrigerator just before you get home, you can readily create a quiche filling. Start with **three eggs and one and one-half cups of milk, cream, or a combination.** Beat them together, then start to improvise. Mushrooms and broccoli; ham and swiss cheese; tomato, onion and cheese—the list goes on and on.

One to two cups of filling is about right to add to the beaten egg mixture. Take the filling ingredients and sauté them in butter until soft. Let them cool a bit, then add to the beaten egg mixture. Pour the combined ingredients into a 9 or 10-inch *pre-baked pie shell* and top with *grated cheese* of some kind (or use *parmesan*). Bake for about 30 minutes in a moderate (350-degree) oven until the filling is set and puffy.

The trick, of course, is that pre-baked pie shell. I've read about organized cooks who always have stacks of pie shells in the freezer waiting for situations like coming home from Portland at 5:30. I am not one of them. But I have found the perfect pie shell recipe which almost guarantees a quiche from scratch in a little over an hour. (The recipe might also guarantee a blueberry pie in the same time. Some would feel there is no contest.)

### Quick Pie Crust

In a food processor fitted with the steel blade, put *two cups of flour*. Cut

*one stick (1/4 pound) cold butter or margarine* into bits and add to the flour. Add *three tablespoons shortening*. Pulse the machine several times until the ingredients look like coarse corn meal. With the machine going, add *1/3 cup cold water* all at once through the feed tube. The dough should become a ball quickly. Remove dough and flatten it between wax paper and chill it while preparing the filling. You can speed the chilling time by putting the dough in the freezer. And you can make it without recourse to the food processor.

This batch will make one ten-inch quiche shell with about one-third of the dough left over, or a two-crust pie. For a quiche, pre-baking the pie shell really helps, but you can skip that step if you are trying for the Quiche-to-Table record. The dough can be used in about half an hour, which is just about right if we pulled into the driveway at 5:30 and dinner needs to be before seven.

I have visions of my mother teaching me to make pie dough and being endlessly frustrated as the stuff crumbled every time she tried to lift it or turn it. This recipe won't crumble and in fact can be slung around on your rolling surface with a fair amount of abandon. Of course, it should not be handled too much or it will become tough.

Maybe the disappearance of the Burma Shave signs is a blessing. Without them to look forward to, the passenger has to fall back on his (or her) own resources. Remarkable feats of imagination are possible, and constructing dinner is far from the least of these.

---

*Lucia Owen and her husband Jim are teachers at Gould Academy in Bethel, Maine, a long drive from anywhere.*



# Homemade

## FILLED COOKIES — CHALLENGE FULFILLED!

*by Elizabeth Benson*

Filled cookies were always special in our house. I had tried making them a few times, but they were such fussy things to put together, and mine never looked nearly as pretty as those pictured in the cookbooks.

It was Christmas, and maybe it was the extra measure of love I felt for the season that told me to give the extra tender care necessary to make these extra special cookies this year.

The process was painfully slow: roll out the dough on a floured board (they stuck anyway); cut out little circles; put in the filling; cover with another little circle (when I could pry one loose from the board without altering its shape too much); seal the edges with a fork and try to pick up the whole assembled cookie and land it onto a cookie sheet before it cracked open. (Once in a while I made it all the way!) You know what it's like, much effort expended, but little success. Then every time the dough was rolled out with more flour on the board, the cookies became easier to handle, but more dry and tough. So finally, I gave up, cut out the rest of the "leather" pieces, and baked them without bothering with the filling. What a disappointment!

Now, you know problems were meant to be solved! Surely there was a better way to make filled cookies. I was challenged! Suddenly, it came to me. There *is* a better way, and it is very easy. First of all, change the

method of rolling out the dough. Cut a piece of waxed paper about the length of the largest cookie sheet available. Place a ball of dough on it large enough to be rolled out to just cover the waxed paper. Lay another sheet of waxed paper on top of it and



press it down with your hands to start the dough spreading out. Then roll it to about 1/8-inch thick. Lay this aside. Notice how easy it is to move the dough around while sandwiched between waxed paper.

Now lay out more waxed paper and roll out another layer of cookie dough, using the same method—making it about the same size as the first one. Peel back the top layer of waxed paper from the last sheet of rolled dough. (If the dough sticks too much to the waxed paper, set it in the freezer a few minutes to stiffen.) Mark with a floured cookie cutter where the cookies will be cut out, but do not cut them all the way through

the dough. For a 2½-inch cutter, place about a level teaspoon of filling in the middle of each cookie marked on the rolled dough.

Now taking the first sheet of rolled dough, peel off the waxed paper from one side. Place this down over your marked cookies, dough-side down against the filling. Peel off the waxed paper now exposed on top of the cookie "sandwiches." As the top layer of dough settles down over the filling you can easily see where to cut out the cookies. This time, using the floured cookie cutter, press all the way through both layers of cookie dough. This pressure will also be enough to partly seal the edges.

Now slide the whole batch of cookies (still mounted on one sheet of waxed paper) onto a large cookie sheet and place it in the freezer for about five minutes. This will stiffen the dough enough so you can peel the cookies off the paper—just like peeling mailing labels off their backing. Place cookies about an inch apart on a cookie sheet. If you like, you can brush cookies with milk or cream and sprinkle with sugar. Bake until they just start to brown.

Gather up the trimmings and re-roll dough again between waxed paper. (Notice it is not necessary to use flour to keep dough from sticking; therefore, you are not adding more flour to the dough, which is what makes it tough. You can roll the dough as many times as necessary to use it all up.)



The following recipes may be helpful:

### Filled Cookie Dough

- 1/2 cup stick margarine  
not low calorie
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 to 1 1/2 tsp. vanilla
- 2 1/2 cups flour (stirred)
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1/4 tsp. soda

Mix thoroughly the first three ingredients. Blend in flour, salt and soda. Dough can be kept in the refrigerator if you wish to make only a few cookies at a time. However, it can be successfully rolled with waxed paper immediately after mixing it. If it does stick, set it in the freezer for a few minutes, and the waxed paper will peel off more easily.

### Fillings

- # 1. *Date, prune, raisin filling:*  
2 cups of dates, raisins or prunes  
(or 2 cups of all three fruits  
combined)  
3/4 cup sugar + 3/4 cup water

Combine ingredients in a saucepan. Cook, stirring constantly until mixture thickens. Cool.

- # 2. *Pineapple filling:*  
2/3 cup sugar  
3 Tbs. flour  
1 can (13 1/2 ounces) crushed  
pineapple drained, but  
include 1/2 cup of the juice)  
1 Tbs. lemon juice  
1 Tbs. margarine  
Dash of cinnamon (optional)

Mix flour and sugar in a saucepan. Add all other ingredients and cook, stirring constantly until thickened. Cool.

- # 3. *Use any fruit jam or marmalade as they come from the jar. (Lime marmalade makes an interesting filling.)*
- # 4. *For a filling that is less sweet, combine one part jam with one part applesauce (unsweetened if possible).*

Now the challenge is yours! Be creative! Try lots of different fillings. The art is not lost, but it's not well-known, either. People will ask you how you got the filling in the middle of the cookies! Make filled cookies your challenge for the holidays.

*Elizabeth Benson writes from Angwin, California, that her fondest memories are of her husband's home in Woodstock, Maine.*

*See the following essay for a special way to share your holiday spirits.*

## THE COOKIE LADY: LOVE IN ACTION

Chocolate Chip Cookies, Ginger Cookies, Peanut Butter Cookies, Fancy Bar Cookies; in fact any kind of delicious cookies you will find in Mary's cookie jars.

Mary is my next-door neighbor. Her heart expands with loving delight when she shares her bounteous confections with everyone who enters her door; whether it be the neighbors, their children, or even the moving van employees who came to

transfer her piano to California for her granddaughter's birthday.

After Sunday School at a nearby church, several children always wend their way to say "Hi" to Mary—knowing full well that they will not go away from their visit without a plastic bag full of cookies to enjoy and share with their brothers and sisters. The smiles on their faces are ample reward to Mary, who has to bake the next morning to refill her cookie jars once more.

Last year's garden supplied Mary with enough zucchini to make Zucchini Bread for her friends and family. It took several mornings to accomplish that task, as I believe the total amounted to over seventy-five loaves.

You may ask, "What possesses one to arise early in the morning to prepare these delicious goodies which satisfy even the most particular palate and to pass them out so lavishly?"

The answer is a heart which is full of love for others. A love engendered by the Love of God in a willing heart can do mighty deeds. Yet one must give of self to bring a blessing to others. No task is too difficult where love provides the motive.

True, one might declare, "I cannot bake like Mary." No, perhaps not; however, you have a mouth to smile at someone else. You have eyes to sparkle with love toward someone. You have hands to perform a loving task—perhaps just to do an errand when you are shopping for a neighbor who needs the one item she forgot. Perhaps you can visit the lonely one who lies on a sick bed. A cheerful word, a pat on the hand can bring sunshine into a lonely heart.

Remember my Cookie Lady and make your day a blessing to someone in your life. You will receive the greater Blessing, for your heart will be enriched in Love.



*Susan Essler lives in Somersworth, N.H.*

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... Jean Randall

"I feel I was newly born when I moved to Maine and everything I do reflects my love affair with this place. All the elemental differences between man and woman seem to exist here. The masculine rocks as opposed to the feminine wildflowers and grasses brushing up against them; the stark, jagged outline of a tree in sharp relief against a background of rounded hills; that sort of thing."

"One reason I love doing woodcuts is that it allows me to express both delicacy and ruggedness. Masculinity and femininity should complement one another, not compete, in nature and art as well as in human relationships."

In between giving one-woman shows and exhibiting prints in galleries up and down the New England coast, Jean teaches in her home ("...the door is always open") as well as in schools; has several portraits-in-progress of local residents; and has begun making (from local clay and hand-mixed glazes) all her dishes and mugs as well as the tiles that will adorn her kitchen walls. She is also drawing up architectural plans for two houses she is designing for out-of-staters.

Her own house, on Forrest Edwards Road in Otisfield, is her best advertisement. Lloyd Grover was the local builder who brought her plans and dreams to fruition and she wants his signature on her door as a sort of modern-day "amity button," symbolic of the fine workmanship he and his crew put into it.

"I was there every day, breathing down their necks, supervising every detail from the laying of the floorboards to the exact slant of my roof. When Lloyd saw that I really did understand spatial relationships he

began to trust my judgement and then we both were able to relax and enjoy the whole exciting experience of watching the house take form."

Eventually she will have a workroom and studio on the second floor with skylights built into the roof. But in the meantime, Jean works all over the downstairs and it is natural to see woodchips by her coffee cup on the dining room table, a half-done braided rug in front of her stove, and the image of a dark-haired girl in a red blouse gazing at you from an easel beside the potted rosemary and the huge basket of mixed wools in front of the long windows.

The house looks onto a Rousseau-like woods which will create a "vista for the soul," once Jean finishes denuding the tall pines of their dead branches. She grows artistically from physical things like cutting wood and digging in her garden.

"The closer I get to the earth and the basic elements of life, the more in touch I am with the elemental things within myself, my own essence. I feel such a oneness with Nature now and I want others to feel that way, too.

"The arts are so very necessary to Man; such a joyous way to acknowledge that we love our earth, that we are glad of the gift of life. Transferring an experience into an art form enables you to relive it. If you are free artistically you can find a way to capture a walk on a dusty country road, or a day at the seashore with its salty smells, the texture of barnacles, the damp sand between your toes, the sound of the surf in your ears."

**Art isn't what Jean Randall did;  
it's what she was.**



*White is a freelance journalist  
living in Otisfield.*

## LUNCH AT JEAN'S

You step into the painting  
as you reach her path  
and walk past the foxgloves  
through the open door  
carved with a hand  
holding a bouquet

And you move  
in this painting  
past the small tiled table  
with its blue pitcher  
filled with poppies and delphinium

Over the rug she braided  
toward the place where  
she often sits at work  
sketching  
painting  
carving  
or dreaming over Persian prints.

Now it is set  
like a Dutch master's still life  
with wine  
and cheese  
and peasant's bread  
kneaded by her  
powerful wrists and fingers

Flushed and smiling,  
you settle into the bentwood chair,  
backlit by the sun

And Jean's blue eyes,  
cobalt blue, whose orbs see visions  
in a leaf  
a blade of grass  
a slice of pine

look up from the strawberries  
she is slicing  
to you in your white blouse  
sitting there at her table—  
and crinkle with pleasure  
at the shift in composition.

*Patricia White  
Otisfield, Maine*



# BARD

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... John Gould

grown up to be successful in life. John, Jr. graduated from Bowdoin and Kathy from Bates. John, Jr. became involved in the paper industry in Maine after getting out of the army; now he and his wife and two sons reside in McLean, Virginia. He has an office on Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, D.C., where he acts as lobbyist and public relations man for the St. Regis Paper Company. There are times when he very likely looks out of his office window and thinks about the days on the farm when he sold his dad's corn to help get through college. It was good training—the best kind.

Kathy is married to Terence Christy, who owns a construction company. The couple have three daughters and have recently moved into a new home in Standish. Kathy taught English at South Portland High School and has been an assistant to the school nurse at Bonny Eagle High School. Now that her daughters are older, she hopes to return to teaching English. John is exceptionally fond of his son-in-law, and the two enjoy doing many things together. He has dedicated one of his books to Terence.

In *Next Time Around*, the elder John Gould reminisces about the time he and his father fished Pumping Station Brook in Freeport where a sign on a tree read, "Positively No Fishing Allowed—Public Water Supply." It is a tender, warm scene that flows back and forth like the tides between Pumping Station Brook, fishing with his dad, and a trout pond created by beavers, where he takes his own son. The cycle of life is revolving in a beautiful way such as only John Gould can describe.

It is said that the way parents bring up their children mirrors the way they themselves were brought up. The closing paragraph of the chapter just described in *Next Time Around* says so much to lend credence to this statement:

"Memory prevails. You see, I wasn't really taking my boy to fish Perkins' Brook. My Dad was taking me again to poach the filter pool. All at once I was playing two parts—and if the first role was illegal, the second was all right. As Dad, I led a boy to the beaver pond in stealth, cautioning him that trouts shy at vibrations and shadows. As Son, I took seventeen trout that evening before twilight made us head for the road. My son didn't need a license at his age, either, and the count was legal at that time—two of us and a bag limit of ten apiece."

### A Daughter's Story

Kathy Gould Christy is justifiably proud of her dad and overflows with stories about the good times they shared together, especially on the farm. She could write her own book "Some Things Pleasantly Remembered About My Father."

"My father and I were very, very close," Kathy describes the relationship they had together when she was growing up. "My brother wasn't into fishing and hunting the way I was."

Kathy is a registered Maine guide and has been since the age of 12. At one time Union Carbide wanted her to go around the country doing exhibition fly casting as a promotion for a new fly repellent the company developed.

John took great pride in the beautiful sugar maple grove on the farm. He purchased an evaporator, built a sugar house, and a small cabin with bunk beds and a wood stove that had an oven on each side. Kathy vividly recalls the happy days in early spring when the sap began to flow.

"We would go up on the weekend with the tractor (although John has deep reverence for the past, he openly confesses that he prefers a tractor to a team of horses or oxen) and tap three to four hundred trees and make maple syrup. We would



keep the evaporator going all night long."

Of course, John enjoyed very much having his vivacious daughter along for companionship, but he also savored the buttermilk biscuits she baked in one of the two ovens of the little stove.

"You could get that little wood stove revved up high enough so that Kathy could put her buttermilk biscuits on one side and by the time she went around and opened up the oven on the other side, the biscuits would be done."

Today in her own very modern kitchen she has a wood stove just like the one her dad had in the little cabin, and she still bakes delicious buttermilk biscuits. She had to have the stove custom made at the Portland Stove Foundry, and it was quite an ordeal; but spunky little Kathy got what she wanted.

Kathy's love and admiration for her dad is only equalled by her love and respect for her mom. Without hesitation she says, "My dad wouldn't be what he is today without my mom."

In 1968 John and Dorothy did a splendid thing. They took a trip to Europe. What was really splendid was how they went about getting there, and how they got about Europe during their four month sojourn. First of all, they took a German freighter out of Montreal for Hamburg, Germany, giving John a chance to brush up on his German as well as his French. For ten tranquil days, they reveled in the leisure that can only be afforded by a trans-oceanic cruise. They had ample time to collect their thoughts together and somewhat plan their itinerary. Upon disembarking in Hamburg, the Goulds bought a Volkswagen and continued to travel throughout much of Western Europe and the British Isles. They went where they wanted to go, took whatever routes met their fancy, and if they fell in love

with a particular place, they cast their anchor overboard and stayed awhile. Although he is an excellent photographer, John took no camera. Neither wished to stand out as an American tourist. They mixed with the indigenous people wherever they went; and, as it is said here in Maine, they "fit right in." Well, that is, except in Italy. Stepping over the same dead cat each time they crossed the street from their small hotel in an Italian town near the Brenner Pass was not the introduction either expected to so-called romantic Italy. Also, John's linguistic ability does not extend to Italian, the food was disappointing, and they soon came to the conclusion that most Italians know only one way to drive—with one foot on the accelerator and one hand on the horn. They enjoyed every other country they visited immensely, but Germany the most.

Out of all their experiences came a lot of good will (It is the opinion of this author that the U.S. Government had better recruit Dorothy and John to take another trip to Europe and to a few other areas of the world) and a delightful book called **Europe On Saturday Night—The Farmer and His Wife Take A Tour**. It is the only book that John has written which is not essentially about Maine. There is the usual humor, sometimes hilarious, but it also brings out the poetical side of John. And since John Gould is now being compared to Mark Twain, this might be the proper spot to point out that John has far more respect for other peoples' cultures. But then, he is better educated than Twain was.

In the closing chapter of the book, John sums up their trip by saying: *"We left our Maine and the United States at home and we journeyed amongst other peoples with courtesy to them and credit to ourselves. As far as we know we offended nobody, and we met many, many who seemed glad to see us. And we*



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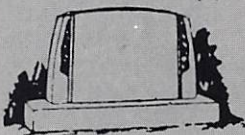
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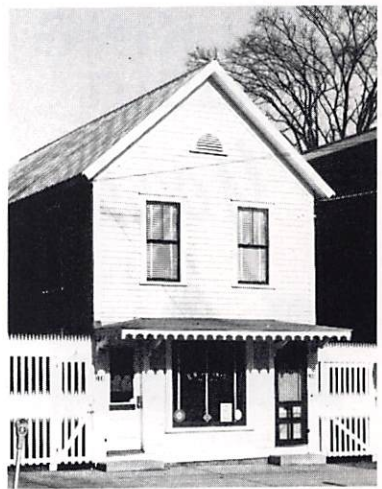
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*had done exactly what we meant to do—we had seen the folks between the airports and the bus stops, people who live there about as we live here."*

## Selling The Farm

There came a time in the lives of John and Dorothy when they had to make a crucial decision; it was the most difficult one the two probably ever had to make—to sell the farm. The decision to purchase it was easy; to sell it was agony; there were so many wonderful memories. To sell it was to sell a precious heirloom, a piece of oneself. But with neither child in a position to take the place over, it became too much for Dorothy and John to care for. So it was ultimately put up for sale and purchased. (At the time of the writing of this article, it has now been put on the market again. The price: \$300,000! Old Jacob Gould and John's grandfather Tom are very likely having quite a conversation about that.)

Before John sold the farm, however, he purchased property on a cove in Friendship, cleared the land, built a comfortable but compact home, garage, shop, and guest bunkroom above the garage to sleep about thirty people. He has a shop that is equipped with every sort of tool and machine imaginable. He enjoys having his grandsons come to visit from Virginia. One of his grandsons enjoys working and learning how to do practical things with his illustrious grandfather in the shop. Of course, John has a big garden where he raises enough vegetables and berries to supply his own household, Kathy's family, and an abundance to sell and to give away.

With a smaller place, he naturally has more time to write. This is graphically evident with two books out in one year. Yet, there are times when John misses the old place, although he will not ever go back to

see it. He wants to remember it as it was. John has a big pile of wood next to his shop and a cluttered little room at one end which is his hide-away and place where he does most of his writing. It is all hardwood, mostly white ash, that he has cut around his Friendship property to let more sunshine into the house. But John is concerned that he is rapidly running out of trees to cut.

"There are times," he confesses as we looked at the pile of wood, "when I wish I had that wood lot up at the farm. I could take the tractor and trailer and my saw and in two or three days cut and haul out all the wood I need."

These are the words of a man seventy-five years old, but cutting and splitting up a winter's supply of wood for John Gould is recreation. He is as active as most men in their fifties. With twenty books to his credit (most of which are still in print) and newspaper and magazine articles that must number into the thousands, John could very well put the cover over the typewriter and call it a day. His book called **Maine Lingo, Boiled Owls, Billdads, and Wazzats** alone is a monumental work which preserves for posterity the Down East vernacular and traditions that seem destined to become extinct as Maine communities become more and more cosmopolitan. His crisp, down-to-earth language is a marvelous talent that sets him apart from other Maine writers, and there are a goodly number.

Yet, at seventy-five, John Gould is not content to rest on his literary laurels. With each new book he writes, the accolades that earlier in his writing career descended upon him like soft raindrops now descend upon him in showers. An editor at W. W. Norton, who has published John's two recent books, wrote to him after the publication of **Next Time Around** and said, "Once or



twice in a publishing editor's life, a book and a writer like you comes along to make the whole thing worth doing."

With the successful publication of *No Other Place*, John Gould is now working in a new medium. John has said about the books he writes, "I just write some every day and when the pile gets big enough, I send it to the publisher."

Perhaps this is true of his previous books, but it certainly does not appear to be the case with *No Other Place*. Again he writes about Maine. He has combined scholarship and humor, and created male and female characters that are equally strong. A carefully constructed plot begins before the Plymouth Plantation was ever heard of and spans a period of two generations. Jebez Knight and Martha of English heritage, and Jules Marcoux and Marie Paul who speak French, team up to establish roots in an area (near what is today Pemaquid Point) called Morning River. Elzada, daughter of Jebez and Martha, is the only scion from either household who remains at Morning River to carry on in the second generation. Although the daughter of English speaking parents, she was well schooled in the French tongue by the lovely and intelligent Marie Paul. John Gould's knowledge of French proves helpful in his effort to clearly and impartially delineate that our Maine heritage springs from both English and French seeds. He is as adept at using French dialect as he is Maine vernacular. His main characters remain warm and compassionate in a harsh world. They have a task to do and they get about the business of doing it. They have integrity. The first generation lives out a long, purposeful, and meaningful life and passes its sense of values and achievements on to the next. There is no pathos here. The sort of amalgamation of generations and the almost imperceptible ebb

and flow of two and three generations that seems to be the underlying theme of *Next Time Around* filters into the theme of *No Other Place*.

The ending of *No Other Place* lends itself nicely to a sequel, and there is a rumor that John Gould is planning a trilogy. Perhaps we are on the threshold of the development of a new Kenneth Roberts, but those who object to reading long passages of descriptive prose will find *No Other Place* more palatable. John Gould says in less than 200 pages what it took Kenneth Roberts to say in 500 to 600, and John did not have Booth Tarkington around to edit for him.

Whenever John Gould is discussed at any length, invariably someone says, "I should think that after all these years John Gould would run out of things to write about."

John Gould run out of ideas to write about! Nonsense! John Gould

is just getting warmed up as a writer. He has not peaked yet, and perhaps he will not in this lifetime. He may have to wait until "The Next Time Around."

*Jack Barnes teaches at Bonny Eagle High School and compiles a future book on Maine writers.*



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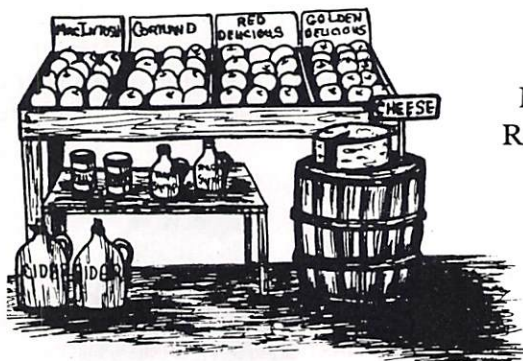
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## View Askew

by Robert Skoglund

As Christmas approaches, shoppers everywhere are feeling the pinch of stringent economies.

My next-door neighbor, Gramp Wiley, claims that he hasn't had to be so careful with a dollar since the days of Herbert Hoover. I've learned not to believe every story that Gramp tells, but the newspapers and TV seem to confirm his claim that money is tight this year.

"You're right, Gramp," I said. "Everyone I know is trying to cut corners to save money. For example, everyone buys the cheapest cuts of meat."

"But if that's true," Gramp said, "no one is buying the most expensive cuts, and that means the butchers must be throwing away the best parts of the animal."

"Someone must be buying the choicest cuts," he said. "It's just that those who buy and eat the best will never admit to it."

Gramp pounded his fist on the arm of his rocker. "By the law of supply and demand, if everyone asked for the cheapest cuts, it would drive the price of fat, skin and bone right up out of sight."

His eyes took on a far away look before he continued. "When I was a kid we had oxtail soup all the time because it was cheap. I always wondered what they did with the rest of the animal."

"Back in those days folks would trade services. People would get what they needed and not a cent would ever change hands. When I was a kid I saw Del Smalley fix Aunt Ada's tomcat. Of course nobody in those days would have thought of taking a cat to a vet for a simple operation like that—stuff the cat's head and front feet down into a boot

so he couldn't scratch, and a quick snip would do it. Aunt Ada was grateful—'How much do I owe you?' she says to Del. 'Nothing,' he says. 'Oh thank you,' she says. 'I'll do the same for you sometime.' 'No, by God,' says Del, 'you won't.'"

"My mother knew how to save," I said. When my brother shut his finger in the car door she rushed him to Dr. Kalloch. He looked at my brother's finger, put a band aid on it, and charged my mother \$5.

"A week later my other brother got his finger shut in the same car door. My mother looked at my brother's finger and put a band aid on it, thinking how clever she was to save \$5. Now his finger looks like a corkscrew."

Gramp said, "Factories that used to have gigantic 'Merry Christmas' signs on them are using 'Noel' signs this year—only takes a third as many colored bulbs to light it up."

"Wait until linguists discover a language with a one-letter word for Christmas," I said. "Think how much merchants everywhere will save when the entire Christmas message can be conveyed by one red light bulb in the center of a wreath."

Gramp Wiley pounded the arm of his rocker. "Saving on Christmas messages is nothing new," he snorted.

Andy Wyeth has been doing it for years."

"A man who drives a new Stutz with musical horns can't be much of a scrimper and saver," I said.

My neighbor leaned back in his rocker and spoke like the Ghost of Christmas Past. "Thirty or so years ago Andy pounded at my back door and asked if I'd give him a hand. His car had sunk into a soft spot he'd found out in the field. You know how he's still always driving around back roads and even places where there are no roads."

"It was pouring rain and he was soaked to the skin, so I got him over against the stove and made some hot coffee. Andy decided he could get along without a car for a day, so I gave him a ride home."

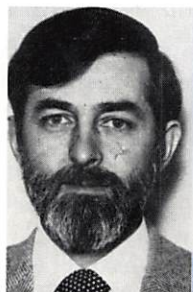
"The next day we pulled him out with my old truck. It wasn't any bother, but Andy was grateful—every Christmas since then he's sent me a card."

"But that doesn't sound like Andy's trying to save," I protested.

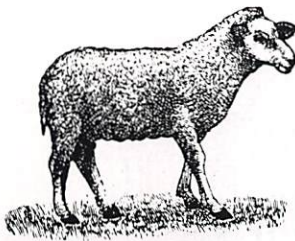
"He's trying to save," Gramp shouted. "Most anyone else with his money would buy me a nice Hallmark card, but all I get are homemade ones he's drawn himself."

Robert Skoglund  
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Robert Skoglund writes from his home at "The Center of the Universe," St. George, Maine. He can be heard on National Public Radio, and is available for M.C. and dinner speaking engagements.





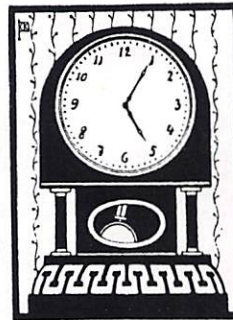


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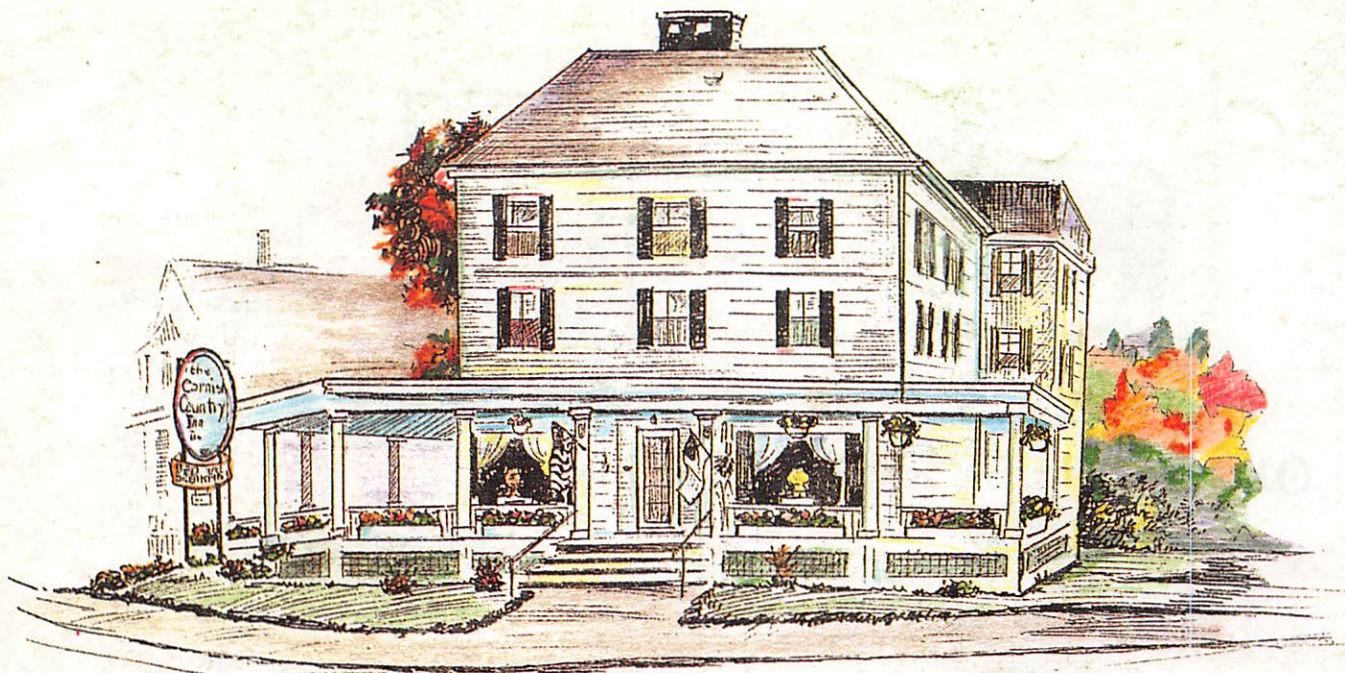
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